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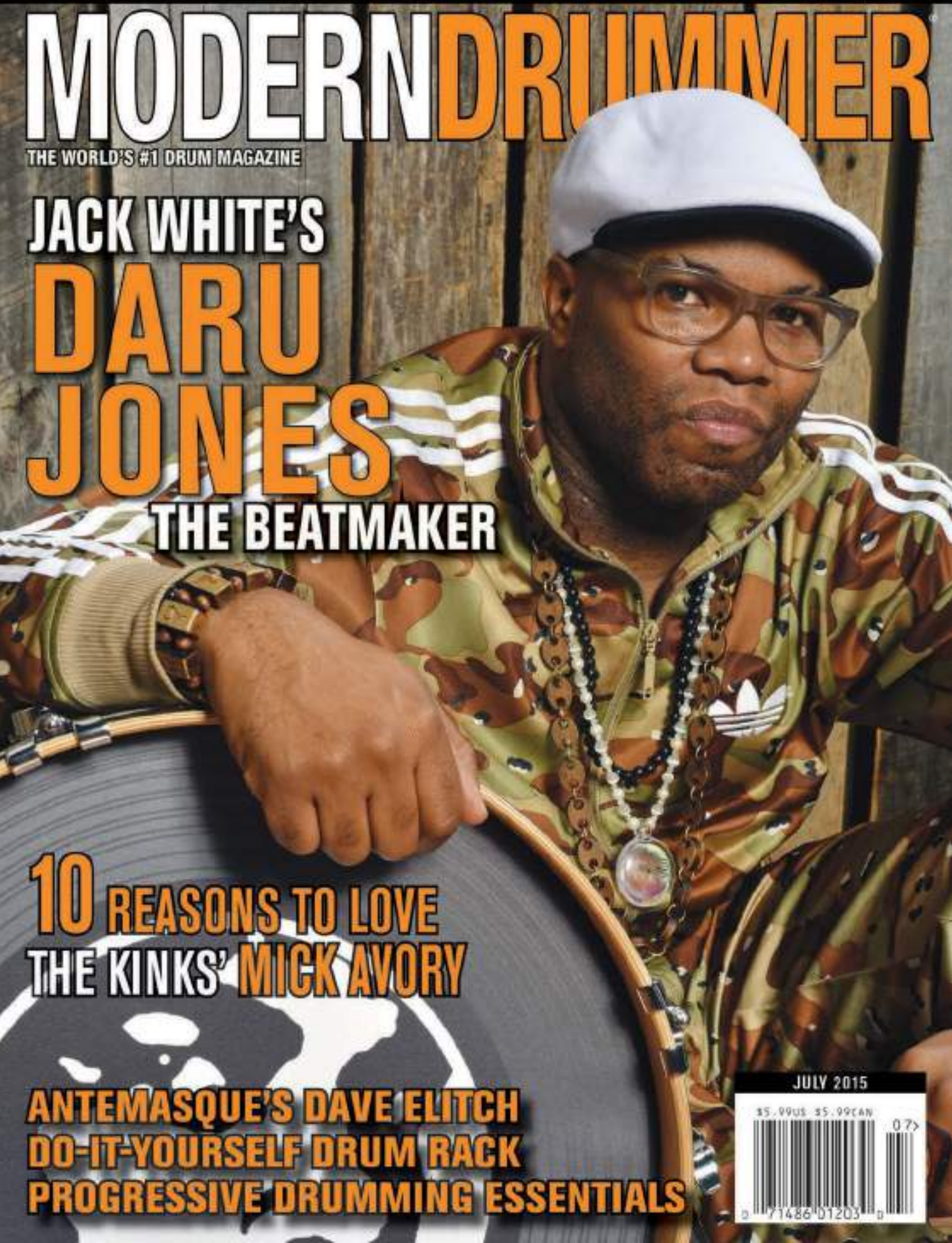

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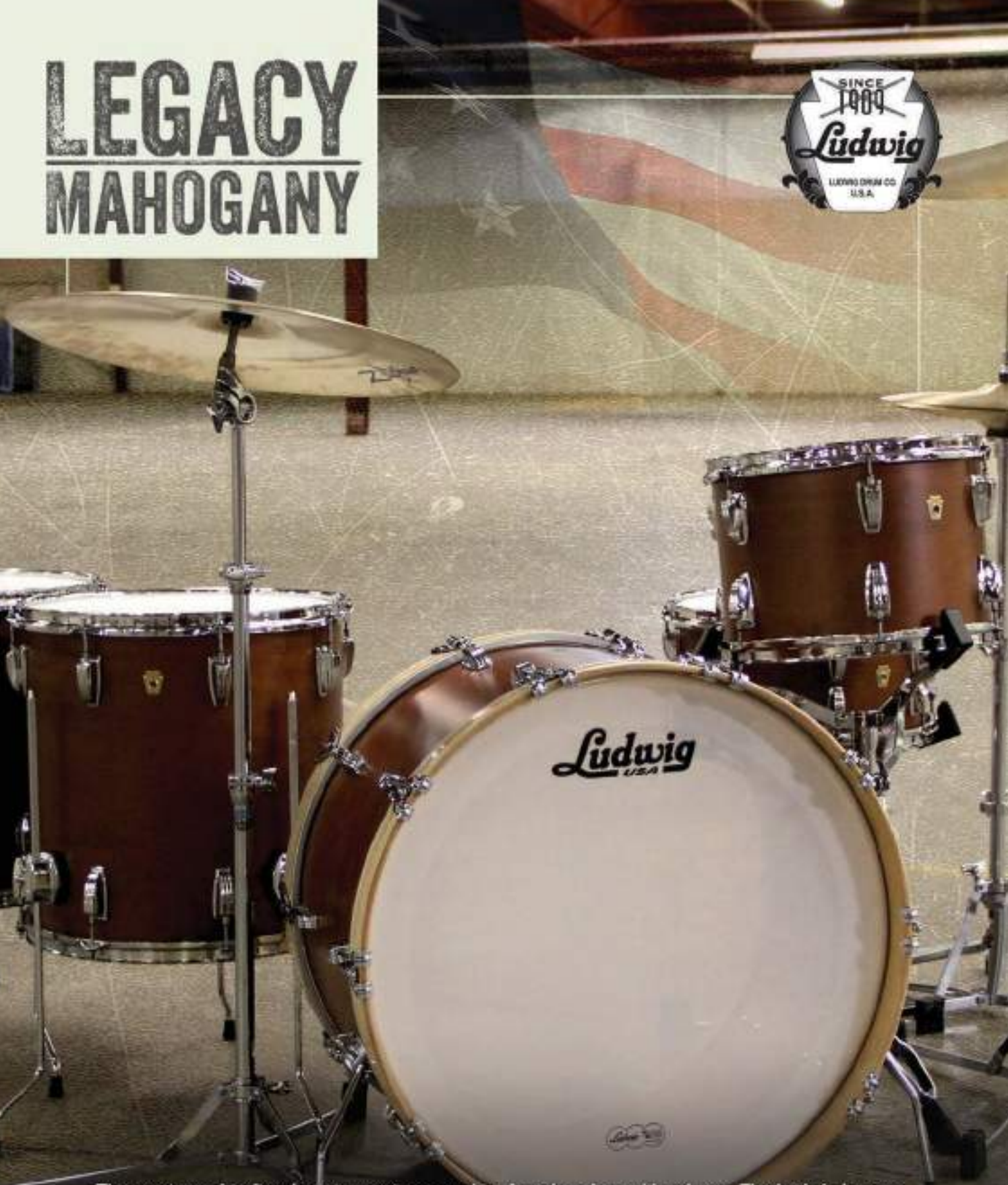

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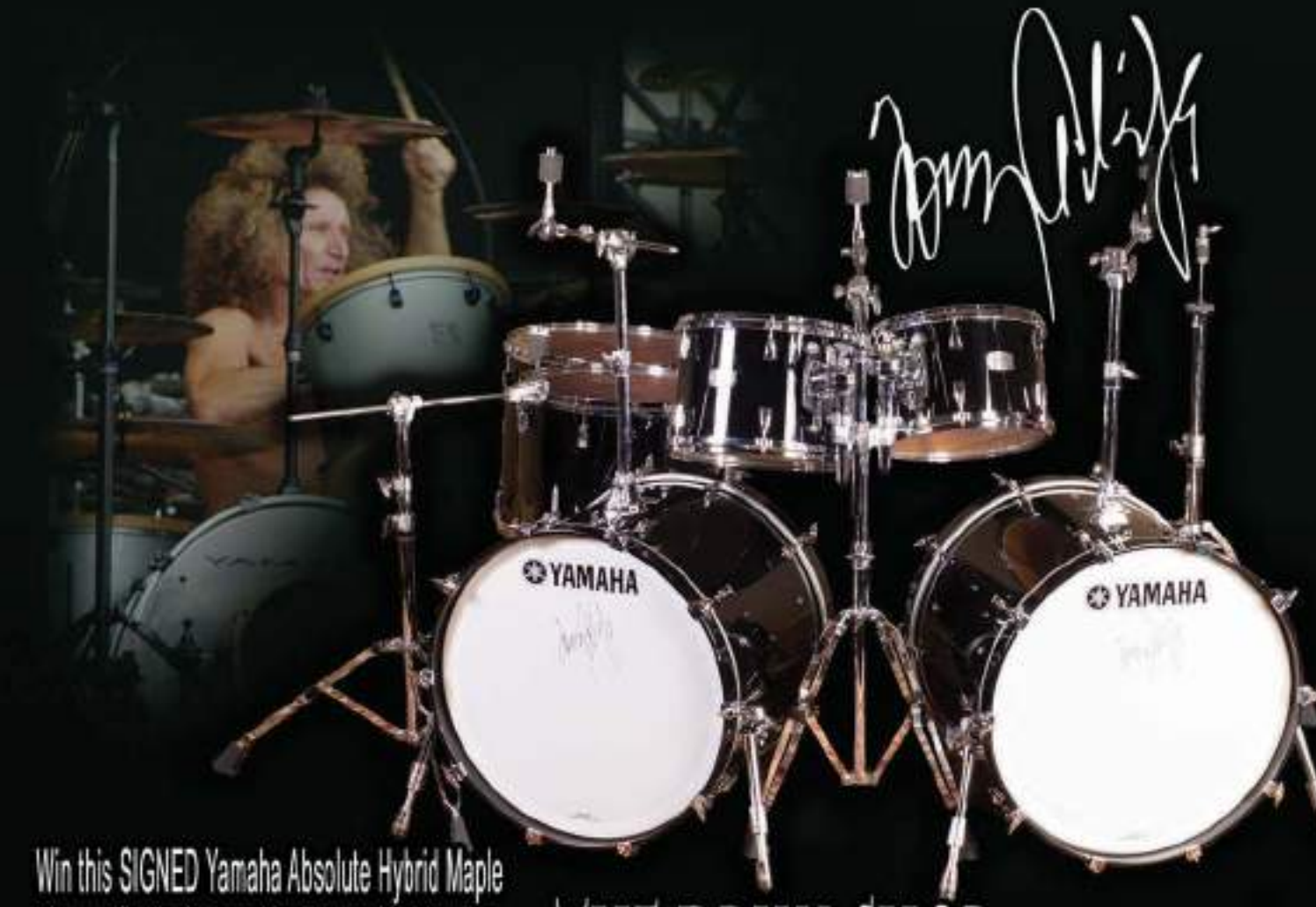

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by Robin Tolleson

"One of the most important things I've learned is how to play with my heart and soul. That, and being in tune with what the lyrics are saying. We're not just banging, we're *listening*." The church-bred drummer packs a lot of emotion into his beatmaking. And it's a wonder to behold.

Cover and contents photos by Rick Malkin

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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

What's on Your Mind?

At *Modern Drummer*, our readers are extremely important to us. We've valued your feedback ever since our very first issue, back in 1977. It's truly humbling to us whenever someone decides to take the time and effort to send a note of appreciation. We even find it valuable—in some ways, *more* valuable—when you let us know about some aspect of the magazine that you're not so happy with.

Your input allows us to do our job better, and to keep on producing the very best drum journalism you'll find anywhere. In order to make sure we keep doing that, we're reaching out to you directly to ask what you enjoy about the magazine, and maybe even what you might like to see us do differently.

Each of the editors gets hundreds of emails every month, and many of them are from readers just like you, asking about everything from who played drums on a classic bebop track to what kind of head you should use with a certain snare drum. It can be tough just keeping up with the correspondence, but I promise you, if you take the time to say hello and speak your mind to us, your voice will be heard.

Unlike back in the day, *Modern Drummer* now has a website; Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts; our own monthly newsletter, *The Wire*; and any number of other electronic media outlets. The opportunities for you to reach us, and for us to communicate with you, are so much greater than ever before.

Just to run down all the options, there's lots of great content at moderndrummer.com, including the multimedia pieces that our killer Education Team puts together each month. Our e-newsletter, *The Wire*, keeps you connected to what's up at *MD*. And if you haven't joined our Facebook family, you might be amazed by how much activity is going on over there.

Then, of course, there's the magazine itself, full of interviews, product reviews, education articles, and drum-world news, plus contests that give you the chance to win thousands of dollars' worth of valuable equipment from our industry partners. We hope you're taking advantage of all the great information, insight, and giveaways we have to offer.

Now, you surely have a lot on your plate, and writing a note to a magazine, even your favorite one, might not be high on your list of priorities. We get that. But to make sure that we continue to make *Modern Drummer* as valuable to you as it's always been, we want to remind you to reach out to us and speak your mind whenever the thought occurs to you. Because, in a very real way, you actually do wield some control over what you read in *MD*. It's part of the process, just like it always has been.

So please send us an email at info@moderndrummer.com and let us know your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you.

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The *Modern Drummer* Pro Panel is an open-ended group of professional drummers who contribute regularly to the magazine's content. It represents an unparalleled amount of musical experience, which members share with readers across the spectrum of the magazine's editorial mix. The Pro Panel was established in 2011, with multiple players added to its ranks during each of its first three years. Beginning in 2014, players are being added one at a time.

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READERS' PLATFORM

Cheers!

I have flipped through your magazine for a long time, buying issues here and there, and now I'm a subscriber. I'm writing because I am beyond thrilled to see that some of your recent issues have featured some players (who happen to be women) that I can look up to. From Chloe Saavedra to Brittany Brooks, Anika Nilles to Hozoji Matheson-Margullis, thanks very much for introducing me to these drummers. Yours in drums,
Caryn Havlik

Trap-Set History

I love *MD*! I still own about fourteen full years' worth of copies dating from 1984. There are always great articles, new faces, and historical information that I just can't live without.

I'm writing to comment on the Shop Talk article in the April 2015 edition, "The Evolution of the Tom-Tom," by Mark Cooper. It was a short article and I'm sure there is much more information that could have been included, but I think it's remiss that the guy who helped bring "trap kit" setups to the percussion world was not mentioned. I am speaking of the renowned drummer Roy Knapp. I have worked with the PAS Museum at PASIC on occasion and have set up Roy's famous kit a couple times. This kit dates from the 1910s to the 1930s. I believe the Chinese tom-toms and cymbals were introduced circa 1920.

Gene Krupa was a student of Roy's and most assuredly learned to incorporate the tom-tom into his kit from Roy. Our history as percussionists is derived from the legacy of those that came before us. Please give Mr. Knapp his due respect, and pass on my thanks to Mr. Cooper for jogging my memory and thinking enough of the history and legacy of drumming to write the article. It is not my intention to sharp-shoot the article but to enlighten the readers to a little more detail.
Mike Bacon

Built to Last

Henderson's Tama pedal

I'm looking at an article in the January issue, "What's This '80s Tama Pedal?" (It's Questionable). The photograph caught my attention right away. I purchased the same pedal, or a very similar one, back in the late '70s, I thought, but perhaps it was the early '80s. I have been using this same pedal since then, although I don't gig as much as I used to, now being at the grand old age of sixty-two! I have never been a professional player, but back in the '70s, '80s, and '90s I used to gig three to five nights a week with a variety of semipro rock and pop bands. I played mainly in pubs and clubs throughout Scotland and occasionally the North of England.

I think it's a testament to Tama and the quality of their workmanship that their bass drum pedals are still in perfect playing order after thirty-plus years.
Stuart Henderson

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Check out individual Spotify playlists for this month's featured artists Daru Jones, Dave Elitch, Kyle Crane, and Vince Cherico, as well as our usual full-issue playlist.

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See video of Gretsch Renown Birch and Walnut kits, Sugar Percussion snares, and TRX Blends series cymbals.

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Shown in US Rock configuration in Deep Sunburst

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TRIBUTE TO THE MASTER

"There ain't but one Tony Williams when it comes to playing the drums. There was nobody like him before or since."

Miles Davis

When Miles Davis invited the 17 year old Tony Williams to join his new Quintet, the music world would be forever changed … and the art of drumming would never be the same. Not only did Tony set a new standard with this revolutionary group but the very sound of his instrument, in particular that of his cymbals, would set a benchmark to which, still to this day, all others would aspire.

Created as faithful replicas of these now iconic cymbals, we are proud to introduce the new Tony Williams Tribute Cymbals. To ensure absolute integrity in the recreation process, Colleen Williams, Tony's wife, hand carried to Istanbul the actual cymbals Tony played on the Miles Davis Quintet's historic recordings. Every aspect of these legendary cymbals has been meticulously replicated by the Istanbul Mehmet master artisans to ensure that the new Tribute models be as close in sound as possible to the originals.

The Tony Williams Tribute Cymbal Limited Edition Set features 22'' Ride, 18'' Crash and 14'' HiHats, together with deluxe leather cymbal bag, a selection of rare Tony Williams photographs and a Certificate of Authenticity.

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NEWS

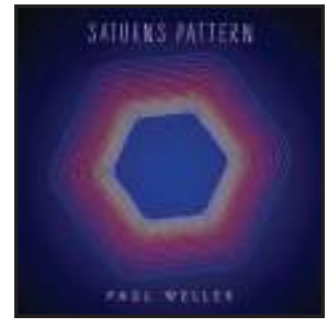
Out Now

Jacco Gardner
Hypnophobia

The Dutch pastoral psychedelicist has just released the follow-up to his acclaimed 2013 debut, *Cabinet of Curiosities*. A multi-instrumentalist, Gardner played everything on his debut, but this time he employed the services of drummers **Nic Niggebrugge** (who's currently out on tour with him) and **Jos van Tol**. "Working with two drummers was really nice," Gardner tells *MD*, "because Nic and Jos each has his own style. Jos's way of playing is generally a little more progressive and aggressive, which worked perfectly in the songs he played, where Nic's playing is mostly inspired by more groovy, subtle kinds of music, which was perfect for some of the other songs. This is the first time that I'm noticing big differences like that between two drummers that I like, which is pretty cool to experience." To read about Gardner's approach to recording the album, including the drums and mics he used, go to moderndrummer.com.

Paul Weller
Saturns Pattern

The new album by the influential British musician (the Jam, the Style Council) was recorded in his own Black Barn studio and produced by Jan "Stan" Kybert (Oasis, Björk, Massive Attack). It's available in a variety of formats: standard CD, deluxe CD/DVD set, vinyl, and limited edition deluxe box set with CD/DVD/vinyl album. *Saturns Pattern* is a nine-song cycle and features drummer **Ben Gordelier**, keyboardist/backing vocalist Andy Crofts, and guitarists Steve Cradock, Josh McClorey, and Steve Brookes. (With Brookes, Weller formed the short-lived original lineup of the Jam in 1972.) Weller toured the U.K. and Europe in March and April, and is playing the East Coast and Midwest in the States in June. Live, Gordelier is playing percussion, while **Steve Pilgrim** mans the kit.



Kentucky Headhunters Meet Me in Bluesland (Fred Young) /// **Jeff Beck** Performing This Week…Live at Ronnie Scott's Special Edition (Vinnie Colaiuta) //// **Unknown Mortal Orchestra** Multi-Love (Riley Geare) /// **Blur** The Magic Whip (Dave Rowntree) /// **John Raymond** Foreign Territory (Billy Hart) /// **Bjørn Solli** Aglow: The Lyngør Project Vol. 1 (Bill Stewart) /// **Kris Davis Infrasound** Save Your Breath (Jim Black) /// **Brian Carpenter's Ghost Train Orchestra** Hot Town (Rob Garcia) /// **EMEFE** EMEFE (Miles Arntzen)

Industry Happenings

Roland Corporation U.S. has announced three new personnel appointments. Steve Spak (right) joins the Roland U.S. team as district sales manager for the Mid-Atlantic district, spanning New York City to Washington, D.C. Daniel Lee (left) comes on board as local marketing specialist, augmenting Roland's efforts to effectively partner with the dealer community as part of the Local Marketing initiative. And Ruby Biloskirka-Conley has joined on as social media and content specialist.

Sabian has announced that sales and distribution of its cymbals and accessories in the U.S. are now handled exclusively by Sabian Ltd. According to president Andy Zildjian, the decision allows the company to take direct control of the message, relationships, and brand focus in its largest market. Sabian band and orchestral instruments and accessories will continue to be sold and distributed in the States by Pearl Corporation.

Vic's Drum Shop of Chicago, America's largest independent drum retailer, has been selected to receive the 2014 Outstanding Retailer Award from the Vic Firth Company. The award was presented to drum shops across America that achieved double-digit sales growth last year with more than $25,000 in annual sell-through of Vic Firth products.

The **PinchClip** and **Bass Plate** percussion accessories, which hit the market in 2015, will have Big Bang Distribution as their exclusive worldwide sales agents. PinchClip replaces conventional nuts and wing nuts on many types of threaded drum hardware, including cymbal tilters and hi-hat clutches, while Bass Plate is a pedal-to-bass-drum dock.

Drummers Collective is launching its Faculty Feedback program, offering drummers the chance to have their playing viewed by members of the famed school's teaching staff, which will suggest ways for players to improve. Relevant topics will subsequently be fleshed out in *Modern Drummer* magazine.

Who's Playing What

Tony Pia (the Doobie Brothers) is playing Dixon drums.

On Tour

Charlie Watts is out with the Rolling Stones.

Brian Rasic

Jay Blakesberg

Also on the Road

Patrick Hallahan with My Morning Jacket /// **Carter Beauford** with the Dave Matthews Band /// **Andy Hurley** with Fall Out Boy /// **Brian Viglione** and **John Sparrow** with the Violent Femmes /// **Dave Smith** with Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters /// **Don Henley** and **Scott Crago** with the Eagles /// **Elaine Bradley** with Neon Trees

Phil Ehart

A new documentary traces the rise of Kansas, which is still taking its unlikely mix of classic prog and heartland rock to the masses. "Carry On," indeed.

Keith Utter/Outback Photogs

Among the musicians who appear on screen during *Miracles Out of Nowhere*, the new documentary that chronicles the rise of the iconic American progressive rock band Kansas, is country star Garth Brooks. It might initially seem like an odd choice to some—though perhaps not as surprising as Brooks' contention that he considers the band as musically relevant as the Beatles or the Eagles.

But maybe Brooks' commentary isn't such a stretch after all. The prog mantle has been hung around Kansas's neck for decades, and it's not difficult to hear the band's influence on several generations of popular American progressive music, from Crack the Sky to Dream Theater to District 97. And alongside the Yes- and Genesis-inspired songwriting is a true heartland spirit, accentuated by the Americana strains of Robby Steinhardt's violin and the soaring, soulful vocals of Steve Walsh. Referring to drummer and cofounder Phil Ehart, Brooks says, "I saw a drummer playing notes, not just beats."

"We were very fortunate that things fell into place the way they did," says Ehart, who considers it a miracle that music mogul Don Kirshner discovered and committed to the unknown band from Topeka. Lucky or not, the group took full advantage and toiled to fulfill Kirshner's expectations. It's an inspiring story, one that wasn't lost on a young musician who watched the documentary and said, as Ehart relates, "That's Rock Band 101—every young rock band should watch this to realize that no matter where you live or where you're from, you can be successful if you're willing to work hard enough and never give up."

Inspired by soul, R&B, and early classic rock, Ehart says his biggest influence was Deep Purple's Ian Paice: "He had the best-sounding snare drum, and his ruffs and press rolls were so clean and precise. But more than that, he just freakin' rocked!" Ehart also credits Paice for inspiring his approach to playing complex music.

A self-taught drummer, Ehart created his parts based on feel and emotion. "I didn't know what I was doing," he says. "I just played what felt natural to me. Nothing was written out; it was all from memory. We would work on sections of songs together in the studio and piece them together."

Though Ehart and guitarist Richard Williams are the only remaining original members of Kansas, the drummer insists that, after forty years, the music has become bigger than the musicians. "If you ask a hundred people if they've heard 'Dust in the Wind' or 'Carry On, Wayward Son,' they'll all know the songs, but very few will know who recorded them," he says. "And I'm totally fine with that." **Mike Haid**

Werner "Zappi" Diermaier

After nearly half a century, Faust's drummer still finds what he needs where few others think to look.

Ian Land

On "Gerubelt," from Faust's latest album, *Just Us*, roiling bass tones create an oceanic wasteland as guitars sprawl and drums pound, shake, and quiver. Werner "Zappi" Diermaier lands on his drums like a ballet dancer inspired by collapsing buildings. He can as easily prance like a squirrel ("80hz"), integrate industrial metal objects ("Sur le Ventre"), or use a handsaw's rhythm as a beat ("Der Kaffee Kocht"). Now pushing forty-five years with the German Krautrock innovators, Zappi doesn't think about drums like we do.

"I don't treat my drums as accompanying instruments but as separate, independent melodic instruments," Diermaier says. "Faust is not traditional rock music. When I play drums I hear a melodic instrument, which I then transform into drumming. Thus my share or part as a percussionist is always fresh and diverse. We improvise a lot live as well as in the studio. As a drummer I have more influence on the development of the music than most other drummers have."

Diermaier's five drumsets are also radically different. One is a fairly conventional setup, apart from its collection of sheet metal. Another is an electronic set. And two others are hand-percussion based, including, Zappi says, "one modified drum with a pickup and a steel plate instead of the drumhead, and above that is a big aluminum sheet equipped with a pickup." The fifth is all metal, all the time. Diermaier describes it as "a rusty two-by-one-meter steel plate hanging on a rack, seven hanging metal tubes arranged in a half circle so they can hit the steel plate that they have been placed around, one oil drum, and several metal tubes lying on the floor for when they're needed."

When it comes to practicing, Diermaier is as unpredictable as his gear. "Practice means just playing away," he says. "A noise can trigger a new compact idea. In that moment music is not 'made' but just heads my way. Technical abilities are not my priority. I'm happy with my skills; they're enough for me. They develop automatically. I also like pinching branches off of felled trees and cutting them into pieces of about five centimeters. I also like doing dishes, for which I have developed a subtle and well-thought-through system that sometimes aids my drumming." **Ken Micallef**

Randy Ciarlante

The rock 'n' roll institution known as the Band effectively ended at the turn of the century with the passing of bassist and singer Rick Danko. Now some friends and associates, including the group's late-period second drummer, continue to carry the group's weighty legacy.

Playing in tandem with Levon Helm in the Band would be a defining achievement for any drummer. This was certainly true of Randy Ciarlante, who was asked to join the legendary group for its '90s-era recordings and tours. Today Ciarlante is once again doing his best to communicate to the masses how special the Band's music is.

Ciarlante, bassist Byron Isaacs, and guitarist Jim Weider on stage with the Weight

"Promoters actually approached me around 2003, right after Rick Danko died," Ciarlante tells *Modern Drummer*. "Both [fellow Band member] guitarist Jim Weider and I weren't interested at the time. But after Levon passed in 2012, Jimmy Vivino, Conan O'Brien's bandleader, told us that he wanted to do some performances as "The Songs of the Band," and we did three shows as that entity. Then in 2013 Weider and I aligned with keyboardists/vocalists Marty Grebb and Brian Mitchell, along with Byron Isaacs on bass, as the Weight, to authentically interpret the music."

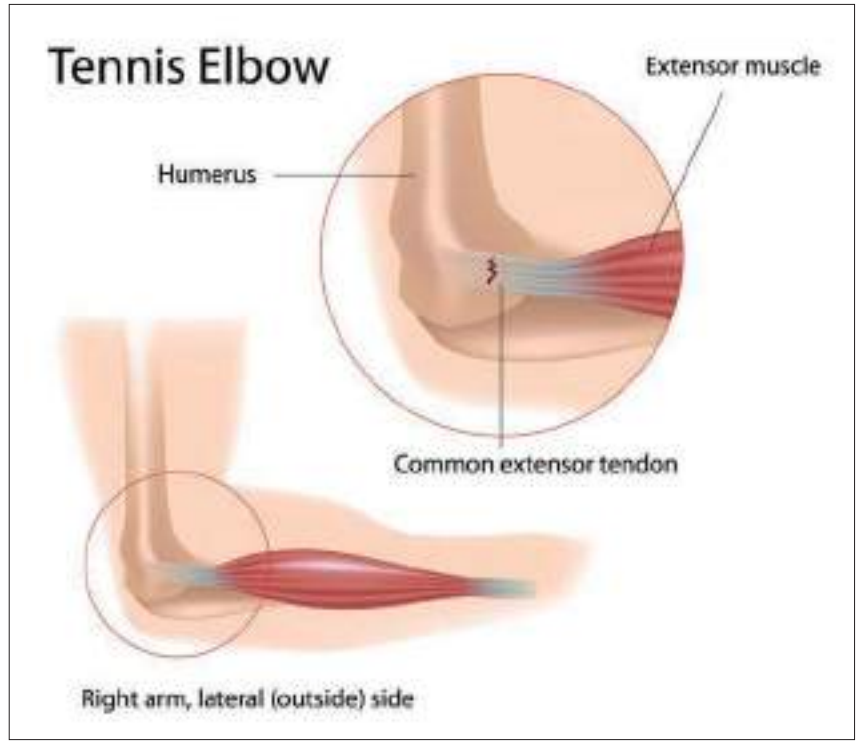
Public interest in the Band's music remains high. Nearly all of the Weight's shows are sold out, which many say is at least partly due to the group's decision to follow the performance aesthetic that the original Band adhered to—no flash, no jive, just music played with conviction and fire. "This is a very gratifying project," Ciarlante says. "We're in high cotton trying to replicate what the boys were doing, plus I get the added drummer's reward: a chance to channel Levon and [keyboardist and occasional drummer] Richard Manuel."

Highly regarded as a roots drummer, Ciarlante has also recently lent his skills to CKS, featuring Gregg Allman Band organist Bruce Katz and guitarist Scott Sharrard, and his latest project, the Masters of the Telecaster, which includes six-string aces Weider, G.E. Smith (Daryl Hall and John Oates), and Danny Kortchmar (Linda Ronstadt, Don Henley). **Bob Girouard**

Advice for Tennis Elbow

by Dr. Asif Khan

I'm a sixty-two-year-old drummer who uses traditional grip. I've developed what appears to be tennis elbow in the left arm. Do you have any advice in alleviating this annoying condition? I've tried isolating bands and even attempted to play with matched grip, but neither has seemed to work.
Gary M. Frey



First of all, you're not alone! This is probably one of the top three repetitive motion injuries suffered by drummers, with the others being carpal tunnel syndrome and lower back pain. Tennis elbow is also very common in other professions, including painting, plumbing, automotive work, and carpentry.

Let's first review the different tendons located at the elbow. Put your right arm to your side, with your palm facing forward. With your left hand, feel for the bony protrusion at either side of the elbow. The outside one is the lateral epicondyle, and the inside one is the medial epicondyle. These are the bony knuckles on the lower part of your humerus, or upper arm bone. The extensor tendons in your forearm attach to these protrusions and help flex and extend your forearm. This anatomy is important when you begin understanding the process of realigning your posture, your drums, your playing techniques, or all of the above.

Pain at the epicondyles is called either lateral epicondylitis (tennis elbow) or medial epicondylitis (golfer's elbow). These names stuck purely because so many tennis players and golfers would present the same problem to doctors. Lateral epicondylitis involves muscles and tendons that help to stabilize the wrist when the arm is extended. Imagine how much stress is placed on such a small attachment point when the arm is extended in various positions around the drumkit. Over time, with or without proper technique and equipment placement, these repetitive motions can lead to microscopic tears at that attachment point. This is when the pain begins. Although the initial damage may not be inflamed early on, if untreated it could lead to severe inflammation very quickly. I should also note that not only is repetitive motion one of the most common causes of epicondylitis, but advanced age (thirty-five to sixty-five) is also a risk factor.

Once you understand the anatomy and mechanics of the injury, pinpointing a possible cause may be a little easier. Although the pain results mostly from overuse irrespective of your drumkit configuration, as soon as it occurs, look at your body position, the position of the drums, and, of course, the sticks themselves. Try playing slowly to find the exact motion or moment that causes the pain. Either your motion or the force of impact will aggravate the elbow at the troublesome spot.

Once the problem is discovered, try repositioning your body and drumkit to alleviate it. Then, if possible, stop playing and rest the arm. If you cannot stop playing because of gigging obligations, try applying an elbow brace or strap. Your doctor may recommend over-the-counter pain medications, like Tylenol or anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, or even stronger prescriptions. Treatment could also include cortisone injections, shockwave therapy, and physical rehabilitation. These measures are not healing you, per se, but are rather providing relief to allow your body to heal.

For chronic pain, it may be time to step away from the drums for a while, continue taking NSAIDs, go to physical therapy, and ice the area. If the condition is serious enough, visiting a surgeon may be the next step. There's a relatively new surgical treatment to reduce the amount of time in surgery and rehab, called the FAST (focused aspiration of scar tissue) procedure. Rehabilitation for traditional surgery could last six months, depending on the severity of the condition.

Ultimately, rest is the key. In some cases, this can mean four to six weeks of not playing at all. The goal is to keep the collagen in the tendon from breaking down any further, so it can heal. Don't ignore pain. The earlier you catch it, the easier it is to treat, and the quicker you'll be back to playing.

Dr. Asif Khan is a board-certified internist specializing in immune disorders, asthma, and allergies and is currently in private practice in Ohio. He has been an avid drummer for over twenty years. Some of his past work can be heard at johnnyhi-fi.com.

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Gretsch Renown Birch and Walnut Drumsets

Two new shell offerings expand the tonal spectrum.

A couple years back, Gretsch revamped its Taiwanese-made "touring drummer" Renown series so that it stood closer in line with the company's top-end U.S.-made counterparts. Upgrades included Gretsch-style rounded T-rods on the tom mounts and bass drum spurs, a sleeker and more lightweight GTS suspension system, stronger and better-fitting tom mounting brackets, and a silver embossed round badge. Gretsch also added Remo USA batter heads, and the interior of the drums feature the company's signature "silver sealer" finish.

Originally available with maple shells only, the Renown series has been expanded with birch and walnut. We were sent identical setups of the new offerings (18x22 bass drum, 7x10 and 8x12 rack toms, 14x16 floor tom, 5.5x14 snare) to see what types of tones the different woods would provide.

Consistent Gretsch Appointments

In addition to the upgrades and sizes listed previously, new Renown kits have identical specs, including 6-ply shells, 30-degree bearing edges, and die-cast hoops on toms and snares. The rack toms have five lugs, as opposed to the more common six-lug design used by most other manufacturers. Renown snares come with Remo Coated Ambassador batters and Gretsch by Remo bottoms. The toms have 2-ply Clear Emperor batters and clear single-ply Gretsch by Remo bottoms. The bass drums come with Clear Powerstroke 3 batters, which feature a built-in muffling ring around the circumference, and PS3-style coated Gretsch-logo front heads.

The hardware on the Renown series is big, strong, and sturdy. The floor tom legs are thick, and the chunky leg brackets feature a recessed memory lock receiver to hold the legs firmly in place. The bass drum spurs are built super-tough to keep the drum from crawling away under heavy playing.

The GTS rack tom suspension system is unobtrusive but also very stable and strong. It's designed to allow the drums to resonate fully, by not touching the actual shell. Instead, the mount connects to the top and bottom of two adjacent lugs. Like the floor tom leg brackets, the tom mounts are recessed to fit the memory locks perfectly, for ultimate positioning stability.

The snare throw-offs are a standard side-lever design, but they're rounded to match the sleek look of the Renown lugs and T-rods. The overall vibe of the Renown series is a combination of road-ready strength and elegant, classic visual appeal. Now let's get to the sound!

Pushing the Highs and the Lows

We reviewed the revamped Renown RN1 maple series kit in the December 2013 issue, and the conclusion was that it was an all-around winner in terms of sound and design. We were able to get a lot of different tones from it, all the way from high and jazzy to low and thuddy, and the maple shells provided a broad, well-balanced tone with a clean, contemporary punch. With the new Renown Walnut and Birch kits, Gretsch effectively extended the sonic spectrum of the series to include brighter and snappier (birch) and darker and thumpier (walnut) options.

New Renown kits are currently available in only two finishes per shell type. The alternative to piano black for the birch kit is this classic satin tobacco burst.

Our review walnut kit featured the subtle satin walnut/black fade finish. The other option is a shiny walnut gloss.

We tested the two kits in the controlled environment of the recording studio, tuning them identically at three tensions (high, medium, and low, with the top and bottom heads of the toms at matching pitches) and playing the same basic groove and fills to see how they compared. Examined individually, each kit had a lot of range and could provide balanced, professional tones at any tuning. When comparing the recordings side by side, however, we found that the strengths of each shell type came clearly into focus. The birch kit, which was overall quite punchy and direct, sprang to life at tighter tunings, where melodic tom tones and a snappy attack are most prevalent, while the darker-sounding walnut kit loved being tuned low for a Steve Gadd–like, guttural punch. The die-cast hoops helped focus the tone and added a bit of high-pitched bite to rimshots on the snare and toms.

Which Shell's for You?

You could extend the toms' tuning range and focus the tone further by upgrading the resonant heads to Remo USA Clear Ambassadors (the Gretsch by Remo versions flapped out a bit prematurely at lower tunings), but the drums were pretty much studio-ready right away. We did replace the non-ported front bass drum head with a ported version so we could get a microphone inside the shell. And we added a little padding (a Remo Adjustable Bass Drum Muffling System on each head, plus a folded towel lying in the center of the shell), which shortened the sustain and dampened the high overtones so we could get a punchier sound that matched better with the focused tones of the toms and snares. Other than that, these kits were ready to rock right out of the box.

If you're thinking about getting one of the three Renown outfits but don't know which is best for you, ask yourself a few questions. Do you need a broader sound that can cover a wide range of styles? Then go with the maple. Do you require maximum cut and precision, and do you prefer higher tunings? Then the birch kit will serve you best. But if your tastes and gigs lean toward big, deep, punchy tones with a lot of low-end presence, then it's all about the walnut.

Be sure to log on to moderndrummer.com to check out our demo videos of the Renown Birch and Renown Walnut kits.

Michael Dawson •

GRETSCH

Alaskan yellow cedar

Black cherry

Sugar Percussion Stave-Shell Snares

Discreet design, careful construction, and top-shelf tones.

Although it's a relative newcomer in the crowded world of custom drum builders, the Santa Cruz–based Sugar Percussion has already earned high praise from top artists like the Black Crowes' Steve Gorman ("Exactly how drums are supposed to sound, exactly how they're supposed to feel") and producer/drummer Eric Valentine (Third Eye Blind, Taking Back Sunday, Nickel Creek). The company specializes in offering fully customizable solid stave-shell drums made to fit each player's applications.

We were sent three snare drums constructed from different species that range on the density scale from soft (Alaskan yellow cedar) to medium (black cherry) to hard (Macassar ebony). The softer woods are said to enhance the warmth and roundness of tone, while the hardwoods emphasize cut and crack.

Fluid, Graceful Construction

All Sugar Percussion drums are meticulously built from thirty-two stave pieces. The vent holes are rounded to a smooth angle and no metal insert is used, which minimizes hardware and showcases the elegance and beauty of the wood itself. The badge is placed within a rounded-off recess, so that it lies flush with the shell. These choices regarding the vent and badges are subtle gestures, but they do a great deal to increase the overall sophistication of the drums. The hand-shaped bearing edges are perfectly smooth and rounded, to eliminate harsh angles and to provide a more fluid transition from the shell to the edge. Aesthetically, these are some of the most gracefully yet precisely constructed drums we've ever seen.

Alaskan Yellow Cedar

Sitting at level two out of eleven on Sugar Percussion's solid wood density scale, Alaskan yellow cedar is a soft tonewood often used for soundboards in acoustic guitars. The company describes the sound of this species, when used in snare drums, as producing a "doughy, round warmth…full-bodied, gooey, luscious thump," and claims that "no matter how hard you hit, she'll never be harsh to the ear."

Our 5.5x14 review drum came outfitted with eight center-point lugs, triple-flange hoops, a Trick GS007 throw-off, twenty-four-strand PureSound brass Custom Pro wires, and a Remo Coated Emperor batter head. The shell is lightweight.

Macassar ebony

Throughout its vast tuning range, from ultra-tight to completely slack, the Alaskan yellow cedar snare was very responsive and had a warm, round tone. No muffling was required on this beauty, even at lower tunings where the overtones became a bit more pronounced. The drum was a dream to play at higher tunings in a jazz context, where the natural warmth of the cedar prevented the tone from becoming harsh or biting. It also provided a ridiculous pillowy punch at a very low tension, and along the way there were many sweet spots to explore. Fans of mellower, fatter tones should give Alaskan yellow cedar a good listen.

Art Lives in the Details

Every aspect of Sugar Percussion's drum design has been carefully and precisely crafted to convey an elegant, rich aesthetic, from the laser-etched chrome Trick throw-off to the rounded lugs and vent holes, seamless shell-to-edge profile, and flush name badges.

Black Cherry

Black cherry is listed as a solid five on the density scale, and Sugar Percussion uses this wood as its "company ambassador" because of its versatility. Drums made with black cherry are said to "deliver a throaty growl with a balanced combination of cut and swamp."

Our 5.5x14 review drum came with die-cast hoops and a Remo Coated Ambassador batter, plus the same lugs, badge, snares, and throw-off as the yellow cedar. Also like the yellow cedar, this drum possessed a limitless tuning range with countless sweet spots across the spectrum. Tighter tunings produced a bit more bite and high-end overtones than they did on the cedar, but the drum still sounded big and full. Medium to medium-tight tunings produced a powerful yet beautifully balanced crack and a focused tone that recorded great and would sound sweet in just about any musical situation. Lower tunings had a wider "splat," and the drum retained an impressive amount of tone and response with the batter head detuned nearly all the way. If you're looking for one drum that can do it all, this could be it.

Macassar Ebony

Nearly pegging the density scale at ten out of eleven, Macassar ebony is super-dense, which translates into drums with maximum cut, projection, and articulation. The wood features gorgeous red-tinged vertical stripes, making this the most visually striking of the bunch without losing the theme of refined beauty that seems to mark all of Sugar Percussion's creations. Like the black cherry, our review ebony drum came with die-cast hoops and a Coated Ambassador batter.

The Macassar ebony model was closer in tone to the bright timbre of a steel-shell snare than to the fat, warm sounds of the Alaskan yellow cedar. Yet it possessed a similarly endless range of usable and musical tones, from a pingy pop to an electronic-sounding thump. My favorite sound from this drum came at a medium-low tuning, right at the point where the higher overtones dropped off and the attack shifted from crack to smack. This is a more specialized drum for players requiring a bit more power and precision, but that's not to say it couldn't be coaxed to produce a wide swath of sounds. For proof, check out the video demo of each of these drums that we posted to moderndrummer.com.

Michael Dawson

TRX Blends Series Cymbals

A best-of-both-worlds approach to achieving power and warmth.

Earlier this year, the California-based/Turkish-made cymbal company TRX released what it's calling a "mash-up" of its medium-weight, traditionally lathed and hammered MDM series and its heavyweight, brilliantly polished BRT series. This new line is aptly named Blends.

The Blends series features a BRT-style bell and bow (polished and unlathed) and an MDM-style outer section (traditional lathing). The goal is to combine some of the power, brightness, and focus of the heavier BRT line with the responsive, warm, all-purpose tones of the MDM. Blends are available in a wide range of sizes. We were sent a review set comprising 8" and 10" splashes ($225 and $250); 14" hi-hats ($625); 16", 18", and 20" crashes ($375, $425, and $550); and a 22" ride ($600).

We tested the Blends cymbals in the studio and on a moderately loud, unmiked Top 40 gig. They were versatile enough to handle a diverse set list that included doo-wop classics, grunge-rock hits, and hip-hop. They opened up well enough to be expressive at softer dynamics, possessing clean, warm tones that weren't overly chunky, and they didn't max out or overpower the band when played at full volume. The unlathed BRT bell and bow did a fine job of tamping down some of the sustain and sibilance in the crashes, which is a good quality to have for drummers who tend to hit hard.

Crashes

The 16" crash was the all-around winner of the group, providing a quick, well-balanced sound that was a bit broader than its size would suggest (i.e., not splashy and without any gongy overtones). The larger Blends crashes required a firmer stroke to bring out their full voice, but the trio played quite well together. The 18" complemented the 16" with a similar but deeper tone, while the 20" would be reserved for big accents and crash/ride sections. Again, the polished, unlathed BRT section helped rein in the high end and sustain, while the lathed edges brought out some richer qualities.

Ride

The 22" Blends ride had a balanced and warm sustain, pingy attack, and strong, deep-sounding bell that cut with a pleasant tone. I wouldn't use this cymbal for jazz or other very low-volume situations, but it had a nice musical ping that would work well with a big band. And it felt right at home with louder, denser music, like most contemporary rock, pop, and R&B. It's not easy to find a responsive and musical-sounding ride that can also withstand more aggressive playing styles, but the 22" Blends was up to the challenge.

Hi-Hats

The 14" Blends hi-hats fell right in line with the rides and crashes, providing warm, expressive tones with added power and a focused sustain. They articulated double strokes cleanly, provided quick "barks" when hit open at the edge, and possessed a strong wash when played half open. Their foot sound was strong and clean. You could also take advantage of the unlathed BRT section by playing closer to the bell, to get more metallic closed tones. For most rock, pop, or R&B situations, these would be great all-purpose hi-hats.

Splashes

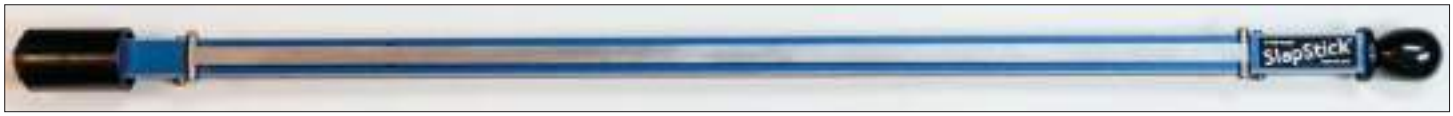
The most surprising pieces in the Blends series were the 8" and 10" splashes. They had exactly what I look for: a quick and flashy attack with a short but balanced sustain that emphasizes the higher overtones. They were neither gongy nor trashy, and there was a clear but musical interval between their pitches. I don't often use splashes, but when the time comes I'd want one (the 10") or both of the Blends in my cymbal bag.

Log on to moderndrummer.com to check out a short video demo of the TRX Blends cymbals discussed in this review.

Michael Dawson

Slaperoo Percussion SlapStick N-100 Noodle

Craving something new and unique to jump-start your creativity? Try this unusual rhythmic/melodic device.



One of the most enjoyable aspects of being a percussionist is the fact that we can make music with just about anything that we can think up. The imagination of one particular percussionist has been hard at work, inventing a new way to combine pitch and rhythm. The result is what Slaperoo Percussion calls the SlapStick N-100 Noodle ($249). The company's founder, Andy Graham, sent us a Noodle for review, and we had a blast figuring out different ways to create music with it.

What Is It?

The N-100 Noodle consists of a 28"-long, precision-machined aluminum housing containing a steel band that extends down the length of one side. Using a guitar-style pickup under the steel band, the N-100 puts out a signal via a standard .25" cable. It's a fretless instrument, so the pitch is controlled entirely by the placement of your hand or fingers on one end of the Noodle, while your other hand has the freedom to slap, tap, or hit the steel band.

The Noodle is available in brushed aluminum, cobalt blue, and black, and it has similar sonic capabilities to an electric guitar. It can be plugged into any effects pedal to alter the sound, and it can be run through any amplifier. For our review, we used a Peavey practice amp preloaded with several distinct effects.

All Plugged In

As we started experimenting with the Noodle, we found that creating musical ideas and phrases was actually a simple task, especially in the context of responding to various drumming techniques. We were able to slap and tap our way through complex rhythms on the Noodle while adding melody to each phrase. We could play the steel band using different hand-drumming techniques, but we were also able to play the instrument by slapping the band with a rod or drumstick.

As we began to utilize reverb, delay, and distortion effects on the N-100, we opened up a whole new world of sonic possibilities. We found that drummers without any experience playing a guitar were able to sit down and immediately start having fun creating all kinds of melodic patterns. We also thought the Noodle would be the perfect instrument to use with a looping pedal to create layers of otherworldly sounds to accompany live drums and percussion.

Who Needs It?

So who's the ideal user of the N-100 Noodle? This is an instrument for anyone looking to expand his or her arsenal of instruments into the realm of unusual amplified percussion sounds that are melodic as well as rhythmic and can be enhanced with effects. It's meant for experimentation, so unleash your imagination and give it a go.

Miguel Monroy

Check out a video demo of the N-100 Noodle at moderndrummer.com.

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3 Steps to an Industrial-Looking Setup

by Jordan Hill

If you use a large setup, you've no doubt thought about making the switch from individual cymbal and tom stands to a drum rack. There are many great ready-to-use rack options, but if you're feeling crafty and want something unique, you can always build your own. This article will show you how.

Map the Design

The first step is deciding which type of rack to build. The rack can have one section in front of the bass drum, or it can wrap around one or both sides of the kit. A second level can be added to mount cymbals overhead. For this article we built a three-sided rack (photo 1). All of the drums and cymbals are mounted to the rack, with the exception of the hi-hat and snare stands.

1

Get the Materials

There are two main categories for parts of the drum rack. The first includes the pipes that serve as the frame (photo 2). The pipes, which are available in several lengths, are .5"-diameter threaded steel, and they can be bought at any hardware or plumbing store. The most useful lengths for this project are 2', 3', and 4'. The pipes can be cut to custom lengths, but that costs more because they'll need to be rethreaded after they're cut.

2

3

4

A handful of elbows, T-fittings, and threaded adapters are needed to connect the pipes (photo 3). These are also readily available at any hardware store.

The second category of parts includes the feet or bases to which the rack frame attaches. The feet must be heavy and stable to support the frame. Brake drums from old cars and bases of microphone stands work well (photo 4). The feet can also be made out of wood. A three-sided rack will require four feet.

Threaded flanges are needed to connect the frame of the drum rack to the feet (photo 5). The flanges have a .5" threaded hole in the center to match the threads on the frame of the rack. These flanges can be welded to a brake drum or mic-stand base, or they can be bolted to a block of wood. Building the feet for the rack is the most difficult part of the project. (You may need to call in a favor if you don't have access to a welder or drill press.) Photo 6 shows a completed rack foot.

Piece It Together

Once all of the parts have been gathered and the feet have been built, the pieces of the rack just need to be screwed together. The 2' pipes are best to use for the vertical bars connected to the feet. The 3' and 4' pipes should be used for the horizontal bars. It's best to connect toms to the vertical bars when possible, to help with stability (photos 7 and 8). Once the frame is fully assembled, you can use any type of clamps to mount cymbals and drums to the pipes. Good luck!

GEARING UP *ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE*

X's DJ Bonebrake

Interview by John Martinez
Photos by Alex Solca

Drums: Natal Originals Ash in solid black finish
A. 6.5x14 Hand Hammered nickel snare
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 14x18 bass drum with Gibraltar Bass Drum Platform attached to hoop
Not shown: 5.5x14 Originals Walnut snare (spare)

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" K Light hi-hats
2. 14" A Custom EFX crash
3. 19" Armand "Beautiful Baby" ride with three rivets
4. 16" K Custom Hybrid crash

Heads: Aquarian Response 2 Coated snare batters and Hi-Performance bottoms, Deep Vintage II tom batters, Classic Clear rack tom bottom, Response 2 Clear floor tom bottom, and Super-Kick I bass drum batter and Regulator front head with 4.75" port

Hardware: Natal Pro series boom stands, snare stand, and single pedal (with Smooth cam) and Standard series hi-hat stand; SKB cases

Sticks: Zildjian Matt Sorum Artist series, assortment of vibraphone mallets

Percussion: Musser One-Nighter three-octave vibraphone

We caught up with the American punk band X, which formed in Los Angeles in 1977, at an experimental semi-acoustic performance where drummer DJ Bonebrake brought out this bop-size Ash kit instead of his standard Walnut set. "Wherever I go, I always have a spare snare drum and bass drum pedal," Bonebrake says. "We're doing semi-acoustic now, so I'll use the felt side of the bass drum beater. When the air hole is offset, it sounds better on my side—more like a two-headed bass drum.

"I tune my snare drums pretty tight," he continues. "In this configuration it's a little bit lower, but I like a crisp snare. Generally I won't use tape, but for this sound I wanted it a little more muffled. I tried using a ring, but it kept getting caught during rimclicks.

"I've been experimenting with tuning the toms higher. I like the low tone, but when playing 8th notes it tends to build in the PA and you get a rumble. So with this set I tune them up higher. Because it's a jazz kit, I referenced Joe Morello from a Dave Brubeck record and tuned the toms to G and D. I wanted a little more attack and didn't want them to ring too long. It works great on 'Hungry Wolf,' which has a lot of tom work—Gene Krupa–type stuff. Especially with these drumheads, it sounds like an older drum, with warmth and definition. Playing 'White Girl,' I hit the crashes along with the snare. Sometimes I'll play the ride as a crash too. And with rivets, if I need a big, low, sustaining sound, it works perfect.

"I bought this vibraphone from Mick Fleetwood," Bonebrake adds. "Years ago he had a sale at his studio space and pulled all the stuff he didn't want out into the parking lot. There were gongs, timpani, drumsets, and this vibraphone. I think I got it for $300. I took it over to Pro Drum Shop in Hollywood to get the pedal fixed. We use it on three tunes: 'I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts,' 'Come Back to Me,' and 'The Unheard Music.'"

2
B
3
4
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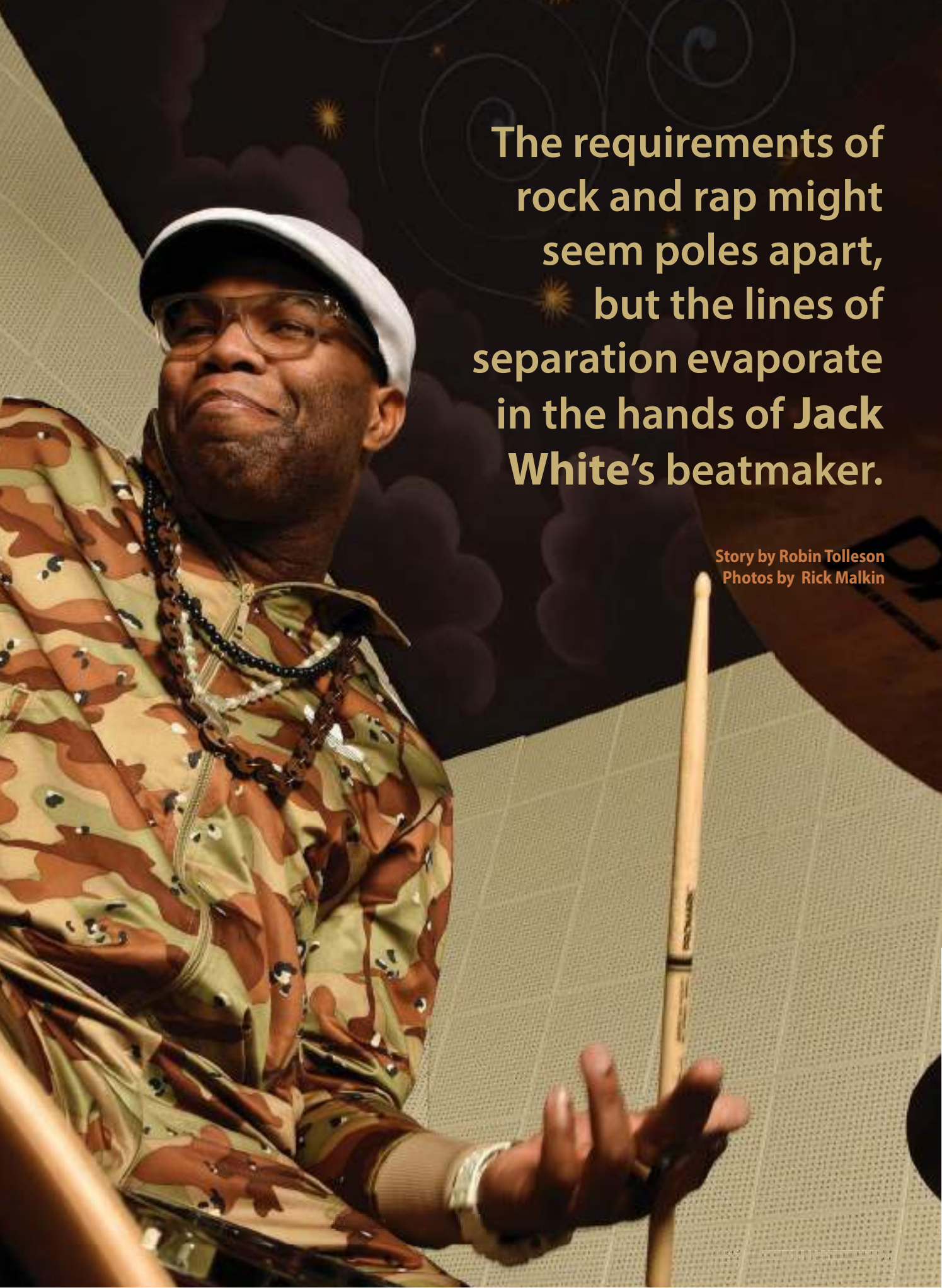
A
C
NATAL

Daru Jones



The requirements of rock and rap might seem poles apart, but the lines of separation evaporate in the hands of **Jack White's** beatmaker.

Story by Robin Tolleson
Photos by Rick Malkin

Lost in the moment, Daru Jones rises from his seat—the closest seat in the house, in fact, to his boss, Jack White. Dressed like a tailor, with silk sleeves rolled up and beret fitting snugly, the drummer gazes from the singer/guitarist to his oddly angled drums below. Bending slightly into the skins as he plays, jumping to his feet for certain accents, he crashes a cymbal and then holds the pose dramatically. He waits, listening for a cue from White before settling back onto his throne and into the next groove. The whole time it seems that Jones is oblivious to his own actions—he's *completely* absorbed in the song.

In forging his style on the kit, Jones combines a love of rock and fusion-era drummers with a deep knowledge and respect for hip-hop and R&B producers. Whether he's backing rapper Talib Kweli or rocker White, or producing tracks for his own Brooklyn-based label, Rusic Records, Jones is always making beats. Switching from traditional grip to matched as freely as he crosses up genres, he's in a constant state of producing as he plays, always *shaping* the sound, not simply making it.

Jones' mother and father are both church organists, which might help explain the palpable conviction of their son's playing. An admiration for the refrains of Andraé Crouch, however, would make room for a focus on secular music, as young Daru began immersing himself in the drumming of Tony Williams and the sounds of a new Detroit. J Dilla and Slum Village were now merged with Smokey Robinson and D'Angelo—*Voodoo* was this generation's *What's Going On*—and Jones studied his rudiments and mastered the art of broken beats, reflecting those aesthetics.

Jones eventually left Michigan for Pittsburgh, and later settled in New York City. Today he spends about half his time in Nashville, where White has his studio and record label. "My career seems to be shifting into country," Jones tells *MD*, only half joking, right after doing a session with Nashville singer-songwriter Sturgill Simpson. In reality, recent work spans the retro garage rock of Olivia Jean to Jones' own jazz/hip-hop hybrid the Ruff Pack, featuring bassist Stephan Kondert and guitarist Matt Loescher. And the breadth of these projects shouldn't surprise anyone even remotely familiar with Jack White, who's made a career of zigging when the world expects him to zag. We spoke with Jones about the full scope of his arts and crafts as he was preparing for a spring tour in support of White's Grammy-winning *Lazaretto* album.

MD: When did you begin playing the drums?

Daru: I started at the age of four, in church. I had cousins and uncles that played the drums, so I was fascinated. I would watch them, and I wanted to do that as a young shorty, so I just started picking up the sticks. The type of church that I went to, they had a service every night. So I was able to get inspired and also get on the drums. I grew up in Michigan, outside of Detroit, Church of God in Christ.

MD: It seems that gospel music has crossed into fusion now.

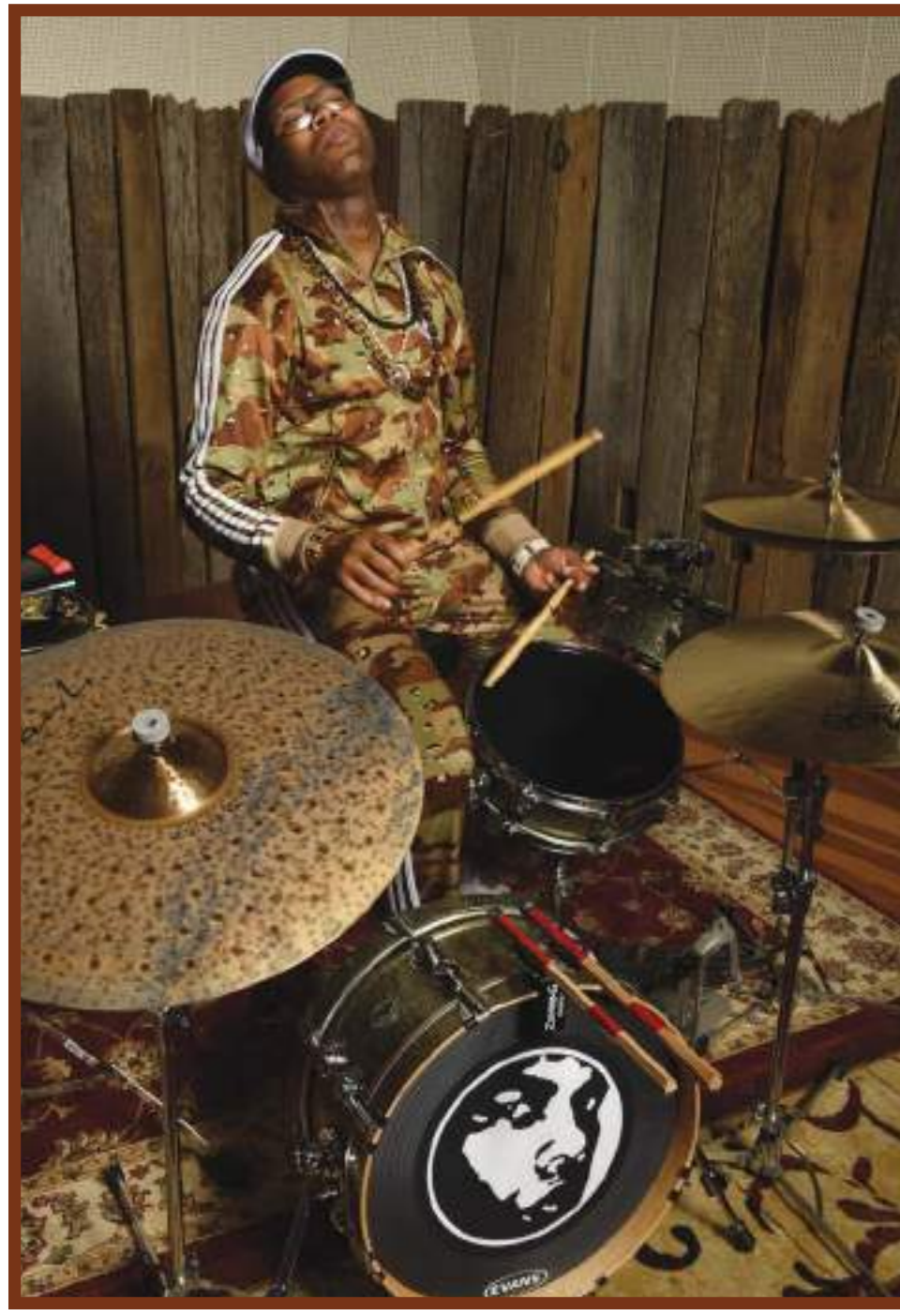
Daru: Yes, a lot has changed since I was a kid. When I was coming up, one of my influences was Dana Davis, a drummer from Detroit who played with the Winans. He was known for having a pocket. And when I came up that's what it was all about, having a pocket and being able to play toward people to worship. It wasn't about doing the fastest lick—it was all about playing a pocket and being a team player so the spirit can come and take over. When it was time to play little fills or whatnot, I would, but it was more about playing a pocket. That's one of the things that I admired about Dana, and also Bill Maxwell, who's a producer and drummer.

MD: Playing in church, you have to pay attention to what's going on with the lyrics and the whole sense of the thing. Do you think that might have translated into your playing?

Daru: One of the most important things I've learned is how to play with my heart and soul. Also, being in tune with what the lyrics are saying, because it's a dynamic. We're not just banging, we're *listening*. When I was young I didn't understand a lot of that, but I learned quick. It was all about listening to the lyrics and playing from the heart, playing with feeling, which is energy. So yeah, that definitely helped shape my drumming.

MD: When did you start becoming the beatmaker that you are now?

Daru: My mom put me in organ lessons when I was around fourteen. She was like, "Son, I'm going to need you to sub for me." I thought she was joking, but she was serious. One day when I came for a lesson, my teacher brought a drum machine to use for a metronome. I was fascinated with that drum machine. It was the old-school Boss machine. He showed me how to work it, and eventually my mom took me to a music store and I purchased the Roland R-5. Once I got that I started programming drum patterns. Teddy Riley, the New Jack era, some of the producers that I was into at the time were using drum machines well, so



"Everything secular, I was told not to listen to it. But I felt that my talents were going to go beyond the gospel horizon."

basically I was trying to emulate my favorite producers—Jimmy Jam, Eric B., and the Bomb Squad.

Then I had a Casio SK-5 keyboard that had a sampler. You had less than a minute to sample, but I learned how. I would press play on the Roland beat machine and then press play on the sampler, and I would trigger the pads and then make beat tapes. By then I was into producers like RZA, Dr. Dre, and DJ Premier from Gang Starr, and I tried to emulate those patterns. Kay Gee from Naughty by Nature was another one.

MD: Did you play in school bands?

Daru: I was never really interested. I was kind of shy at that time about my drumming. My mom wanted me to advance, so she put me in chart-reading lessons. But I wanted to play gospel. I joined a gospel jazz trio called the Roger Jones Trio, and that gave me an opportunity to back gospel artist Kim Burrell and perform with a stage play that featured gospel legend Vanessa Bell Armstrong. Out of high school I joined a percussion ensemble that toured in France and played at the French version of PASIC, a lot of concerts and festivals. We played the Detroit Jazz Festival four or five times, so I got a chance to get my chops up and get exposed on that platform.

MD: Then you are basically self-taught?

Daru: I learned how to play by ear. A lot of my mentors and people around me said that I had a good ear and I was able to pick up and learn quick, and I had a good memory. I would get compliments about that, so that stuck with me. Then mentors put me on to jazz. So it was Tony Williams and then eventually Dave Weckl and Vinnie Colaiuta. I wanted to transcribe all the projects they were on and learn those chops. It got me in some trouble too, because I was trying to play in service, and I wanted to play these polyrhythms and Vinnie Colaiuta chops during worship. During that time it wasn't in. Now it's in.

Eventually it was Steve Gadd, Peter Erskine, Omar Hakim, Dennis Chambers, and all of those guys. I got exposed to those Buddy Rich Memorial Concerts. I had the first two volumes and would watch all the time—the ones with Dave Weckl, Vinnie, and Steve Gadd. I was mesmerized by their playing. The other one was Dennis Chambers, Gregg Bissonette, and Louie Bellson. And I wanted to learn all of that.

Basically, the church I came up in,

Daru's Setup

Drums: DW in gold galaxy finish
A. 8" LP Micro Snare
B. 5.5x10 tom
C. 4x13 snare
D. 5x18 bass drum
E. 6x12 tom

Cymbals: Paiste
1. 16" hi-hats (Signature Precision crash top/Rude Thin crash bottom; also uses 16" PST X Swiss Hats)
2. 20" Masters Dark crash
3. 22" Signature Dark Energy ride Mark I

Hardware: DW, including 6500 hi-hat, 6300 snare stand, 6710 cymbal stands, DWCP9900AL Heavy Duty Air Lift double tom stand, MDD double pedal, and 9100 Workhorse throne

Heads: Evans, including Hydraulic Black snare and tom batters and Hydraulic Glass bottoms, EMAD Onyx bass drum batter, and Inked by Evans front head with Rusic Records logo

Sticks: Promark Select Balance Forward Balance 580 sticks and Hot Rods

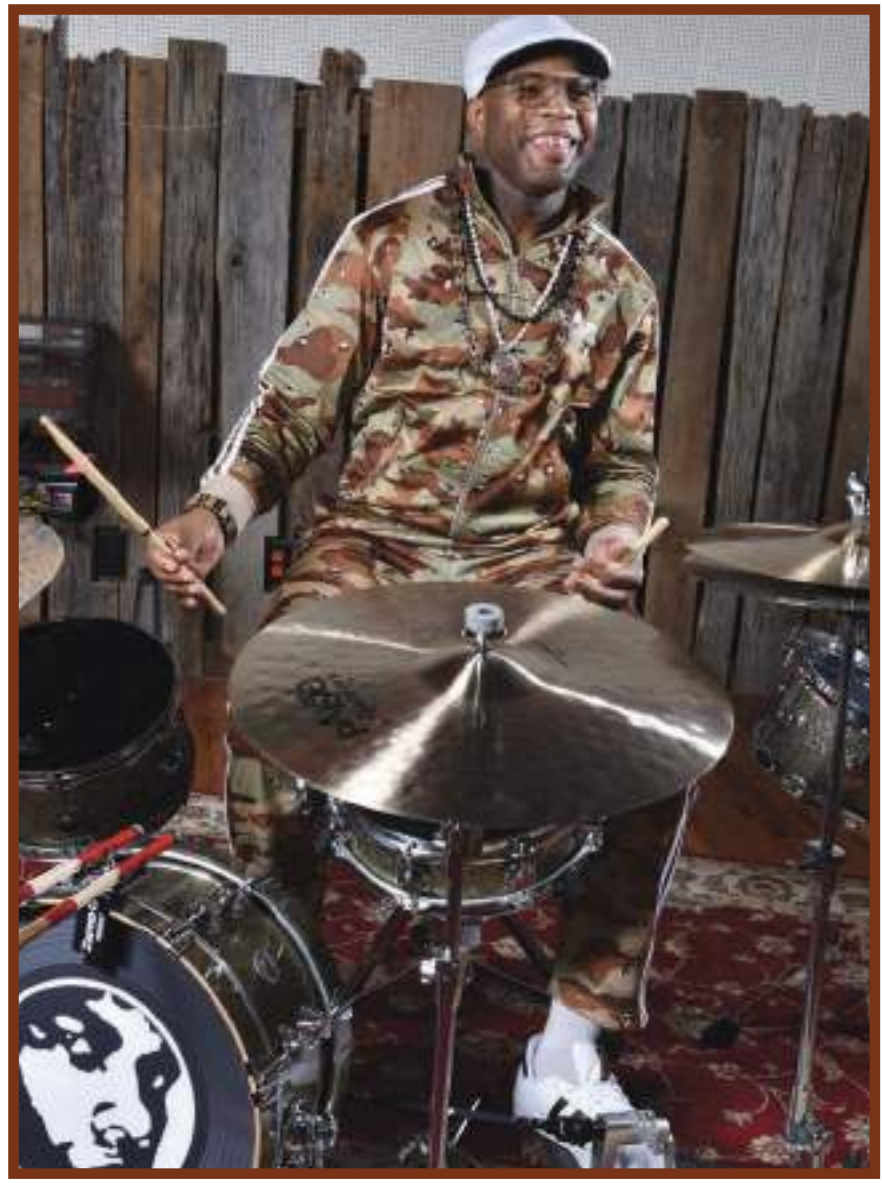
Percussion: LP Jam Block, Cyclops tambourine, and Rock Ridge Rider cowbell

Accessories: LP Mini Everything rack, Maxonix Zero-G Anti-Gravity stick holder

everything outside of gospel was secular, and I was told not to listen to it. But I just felt that my talents were going to go beyond the gospel horizon, so I wanted to pursue that. I kind of went against the grain. One thing that I admired about drummers like Vinnie and Gadd was that no matter what situation you put them in, they seemed to be able to get the job done and have their style. I wanted to be a versatile drummer, and whatever situation you put me in I wanted to get the job done and also have my swag, or flavor.

MD: You blend the chops with a hip-hop/studio sensibility. I can hear that in some of Jack White's tracks, as well as the Ruff Pack stuff.

Daru: I go into those recording sessions with the mind of being a producer: *What would work?* It's not really about what I want to do. It's like there are a thousand things you could do for the song, but only a



Recordings

Jovanotti "La Bohème" from Lorenzo 2015 CC. /// **Akua Naru** "Mr. Brownskin" from The Miner's Canary /// **Olivia Jean** "You Really Got Me" (B-side of "Merry Widow" single) /// **Liam Bailey** "On My Mind" from Definitely Now /// **Jack White** "Lazaretto" from Lazaretto, "Trash Tongue Talker" from Blunderbuss, "Inaccessible Mystery" (B-side of "Freedom at 21" single) /// **Jaqee** "Hero (Intro)" from Yes I Am /// **the Ruff Pack** "You Knoe" from With You (hidden bonus track) /// **Brittany Howard and Ruby Amanfu** "I Wonder" single /// **Random Axe** "The Hex" from Random Axe /// **Black Milk** "Round of Applause" from Album of the Year /// **Black Milk and Jack White** "Brain" single

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couple will make the song jump off. I'll be listening to pop hits and be like, *Why do I like that song?* It's because they're selective in their fills and also the groove. That's my focus in being a producer, to help me to be more thoughtful. All of my influences, from the church to being exposed to hip-hop—all of that helped when it came time to get in the studio to work.

MD: You have an active production company, Rusic Records.

Daru: My sound, my style—I call it soul-hop. It's a combination of hip-hop and soul. I wanted to come with the same aggression as hip-hop beats, but instead of producing rappers I wanted to produce soul singers. My sister Rena was one of the first artists. I started producing in high school.

One of my friends began working with Phil Solomon from Guyana. He makes steel drums and is one of the top steel-pan tuners. They were in need of a drummer for a concert. I rehearsed, did the performance, and made an impression on Phil to where he offered me a position playing in his band, the Steel Impressions. That allowed me to move to Pittsburgh, and a lot of opportunities came from that.

Pittsburgh has a cool jazz scene, and I started mingling and people started getting into my work. I started playing in the house band of the then-celebrated venue the Shadow Lounge and with different bands like Eviction Notice and touring act Aaron "Ab" Abernathy, a soul singer from Cleveland who I first played for when his original drummer was a no-show on a tour stop in Pittsburgh. At the time I was the new kid in town and getting more popular. It turned out that Ab was the music director for one of my favorite hip-hop bands from Detroit, Slum Village. Slum Village wanted to perform with a live band, so Ab was like, "Why don't you have my man Daru and me come in as your band." So that was kind of a career change, being able to work with a group that I always wanted to work with.

Slum Village had one of my favorite producers, J Dilla. It was an amazing opportunity to play the Essence Festival, play Canada and several dates. Slum Village had an opening act called Black Milk, a producer-rapper from Detroit, and Black Milk liked what we did, so eventually I transitioned to working full time with him. By this time I'd outgrown the Pittsburgh scene and ended up settling in New York City. I began working with a friend from the U.K., Barry King, who believed it was time to take my career to the next level. I started meeting new people and getting an opportunity to work with hip-hop artists like Pharoahe Monch and Black Moon, as well as soul artist Bilal and classical violinist Daisy Jopling.

A good friend of mine, Ray Angry, plays with the Roots from time to time. He's a producer and music director and is always putting musicians together, so he introduced me to this new band scenario with Talib Kweli called Idle Warship, featuring a singer named Res from Philly. I did a showcase with them and they were impressed with my playing. Ray was their music director for a couple gigs, and then it was handed down to me.

Eventually I started playing for Talib Kweli, and I became his music director. Then another opportunity came through a friend of mine, musician Brady Watt, with a producer by the name of Ski Beatz. Ski produced for Jay Z and was trying to fuse rock and hip-hop together. So I started playing with Ski Beatz, and the name of that band was the Senseis. My plate was really full.

MD: Speaking of Dilla, I hear essences of his "broken" beats in your playing.

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Daru Jones

Daru: Thank you, yeah. I'm always practicing on my own, just playing to some of my favorite producers, such as DJ Premier, Dilla, and RZA. I was training, not knowing that I was going to be playing in that scenario, so it just came automatic. I feel like you are what you eat—you are what you listen to. I listen to a lot of Dilla stuff—Premier and other producers and musicians as well—so it just comes out in my playing.

MD: It's interesting how it comes out naturally.

Daru: Yeah, it's funny because I was already doing that. Artists or different drummers kind of want to separate those worlds, the machine versus playing for real, but I was one of those guys that wanted to play what the machine is doing. I was all about trying to emulate what I heard, whether it was a machine or a live drummer.

MD: Sometimes producers stop machines or loops, and I like the way you do that with your live playing. You're not afraid to stop and leave space.

Daru: Thank you. Yes, sir. When I'm playing or performing, I'm thinking as a producer as well. I'm listening to the lyrics and I'm actually producing the song while I'm playing it. I'm like, *Okay, they didn't have a drop on the record, but I hear a drop right here.* That way whatever the artist is saying speaks out. That's a lot of time what DJs do and producers do when they make tracks. They do drops just to highlight a specific phrase or word, so that's what I wanted to do in my playing.

Another person I was big into was Questlove. When the Roots came out, they were like the only live band. I do remember the Beastie Boys doing some live stuff, and Pharcyde had some live things going on. But the Roots, I gravitated toward them, just trying to figure out who the drummer was. I remember seeing them on TV, and Quest…I was like, *Oh, man, that's pretty hip.*

MD: How did you begin playing with Jack White?

Daru: That scenario came from Black Milk. Jack is a huge hip-hop head, for people that don't know. Before we go on stage we're listening to hip-hop. Jack was producing collaborations on his record label, Third Man Records, and Black Milk put out a project, *Album of the Year*, which I had the honor of playing on. There's a song on that called "Deadly Medley," and I heard that Jack got ahold of that and got excited, and wanted to collaborate with Black Milk. Jack offered, "Come to Nashville. I'm going to bring some musicians in." But Black was like, "Well, I want to bring my guys down there, the guys that I take on the road with me." So they flew us to Nashville and we recorded at Jack's studio and performed at his label.

I knew Jack was a drummer, but I didn't take it that seriously. During our performance there's a song called "Losing Out," and I have a drum solo in it. Jack was in the back of the room, and after that song he ran to the front of the stage and put his hand up, like, "Yeah!" I guess I did something that was cool. So a few months later he flew me to Nashville to work on a collaboration with RZA from Wu-Tang Clan. RZA canceled, though, and I was heartbroken, and I know that Jack felt bad. He didn't want to just send me back home—he had also hired a musician from the Raconteurs—and we were in there trying to figure out what to do.

Jack said, "Well, I have a couple solo songs that I've been messing around with. Maybe we could try those." So I tracked for him for a couple days—we did about four tunes—and from what I was told that's what started *Blunderbuss*, his first solo project. I played on "Trash Tongue Talker," with the Spanish rhythm at the beginning and a bluesy honky-tonk type of jam.

MD: Jack seems to have a good rhythmic sensibility.

Daru: I feel like he hired me because he wanted me to do what I do, to bring my hip-hop background and influence to his playing. If you listen to the White Stripes, you can hear that it has that hip-hop undertone. I feel like people could sample that and use it, and I think that's what he wanted. He evidently liked my style. He wanted me to bring my flair to the table, so it's like a dream situation. It's like, "Okay, I want you to learn my catalog, but I want you to play it how you would play it." That's the dream situation.

Any work scenario that I get in, I try to

Influences

Ron Winans Family & Friends Choir III (Dana Davis) /// **Kim Burrell** Try Me Again (Chris Dave) /// **Bob James** One (Steve Gadd, Idris Muhammad, Ralph MacDonald) /// **the Police** Ghost in the Machine (Stewart Copeland) /// **Frank Zappa** Joe's Garage (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **Chick Corea Elektric Band II** Paint the World (Gary Novak) /// **Vinnie Colaiuta** Vinnie Colaiuta (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **the Roots** Do You Want More?!!!??! (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson) /// **Gang Starr** Hard to Earn (DJ Premier) /// **D'Angelo** Voodoo (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson) /// **J Dilla** Welcome 2 Detroit (J Dilla, Karriem Riggins)

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Daru Jones

respect the producers of the music. I feel like the fans like the original for certain reasons, so even though he gave me that freedom, I still know that the White Stripes thing will need that foundation. So I didn't go out too far, but when I had time I would add my flavor. That's been my concept. If anybody wants me to cover their tunes, I want to play as closely as possible to the original but also add my taste.

It's cool, because with Jack we're on an adventure. We're off the cuff. We don't know. We're on the same roller-coaster ride as the audience, and that's how he wants it to be. There's no set list. Sometimes he'll come over and call the songs off to us, or sometimes you have to just listen and hear what he's playing. And then sometimes he just plays stuff that we've never rehearsed before. [laughs] So it's a cool situation.

MD: There's a lot of personality in your beats, including your tom work. The beat on "Would You Fight for My Love?" from *Lazaretto* is kind of an updated Ginger Baker groove.

Daru: It's funny how those tunes come together. I don't want to give away the secret to how he does stuff, but with James Brown and some of the greats, it's amazing how those songs come together. From what I was told, a lot of that James Brown stuff just came out of them jamming out, and then James would hear something and say, "Play that again," and just tell them to loop it. Same as D'Angelo's *Voodoo*—I heard that a lot of that stuff just came from jamming out, then they would find something they liked that was cool and embellish that.

A lot of times in the recording studio I'm listening to the music and I'll be fumbling around playing something. Then the producer will be like, "What was that you just did? Let's do that." So that was…not a mistake, but just an idea that ended up being a part of the track.

MD: It pays to put those ideas out there.

Daru: I respect Jack's production mindset, you know. It's cool, because I'm a producer too, so even though he was picking stuff out, I was like, *Yeah, I'm a producer—I would do the same thing.* It's cool to be in that scenario where my voice is respected, because that isn't always the case. Sometimes they want you to know that you're the sideman and you're the work for hire, and I get it—they're the star. But this scenario has always been about us shining and giving us a voice and letting us be heard, and I appreciate that.

MD: The track "Lazaretto" has a great live drum sound, like an old Jeff Beck track.

Daru: That track was totally inspired by hip-hop. It was inspired by…um, I can mention this because he brought it up in an interview. It was inspired by MC Lyte. She's a rapper—I hate to say "old school" [laughs], but MC Lyte has a song called "Cha Cha Cha" with a similar rhythm, but we played it our own way and added our own power to it.

MD: You and Jack had good chemistry from the beginning.

Daru: Yeah, he just treated me like family. Another thing that sparked his interest…I remember us going to eat right before the rehearsal, and he asked me which drummers I liked and listened to. I said, "Well, Terry Bozzio." My mom got me his first instructional tape. I don't think Jack expected me to say that, but I think he was impressed, because I heard from one of the other band members that he was like, "This guy's going to be my friend." And we just clicked after that.

MD: That's a real nice beat you came up with on the track "Hero" by Jaqee, from the album *Yes I Am*.

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Daru: That came from my band the Ruff Pack. They're Vienna based, and when we tour in Europe sometimes we'll feature a rapper or a singer. One time in Germany the booking agent connected us together, and her producers loved my drumming. They sent me files from Germany and I recorded a few songs for her project, and "Hero" is one of those tracks. In those situations I feel like the music tells me what to do. They didn't give me any instructions, so I had to put the producer's cap on. When I heard the track, that's what came to mind.

MD: The Ruff Pack could be described as John Scofield meets J Dilla.

Daru: Our concept was pretty much fusing jazz into hip-hop. And sometimes in the midst of us producing our own compositions, we cover instrumentals from some of our favorite producers—J Dilla, Premier, Pete

Rock, and so on. It's cool to bring those two worlds together. That was our mission, fusing jazz and hip-hop, playing our own tunes. Sometimes we'll do a Dilla cover and we'll come back, so that's one of my favorite work scenarios, just being able to play music that I'm a fan of.

The Ruff Pack has a special new project that we're shopping around. It's a tribute to Thelonious Monk, a mix of our vibe, hip-hop, and Monk, and it's cool. And I want to continue to build my own brand, Rusic Records. I put out my first real project with my sister Rena, called *Honey*. I did all the production and electronics. I want people to know that I'm a producer as well, working with new artists and expanding with that.

MD: Your kit setup is unconventional, especially the angles of your drums and cymbals.

Daru: That's been my setup for eight or nine years, and it came about from me just trying to be unique and have a voice. Playing hip-hop, that's what it was all about—being original and having some way of standing out. So I started doing the "jazz tilt" with the snare drum first, and then I wondered what would happen if I tried the floor tom and then the cymbals. So it all just kind of came from me wanting my drums a certain way, and eventually I grew into it.

I used to emulate Vinnie's setup, with the China on the left. So I've tried different setups, but eventually I wanted to have my own. Another reason was that I had a small car. [laughs] I started getting a lot of work, and I was trying to figure out a way to get all the gear in my car. I was like, *Man, I'm just going to take a snare drum and a kick.* It actually challenged me, because I had to learn not to depend on toms to be creative, and do fills with this simplistic setup.

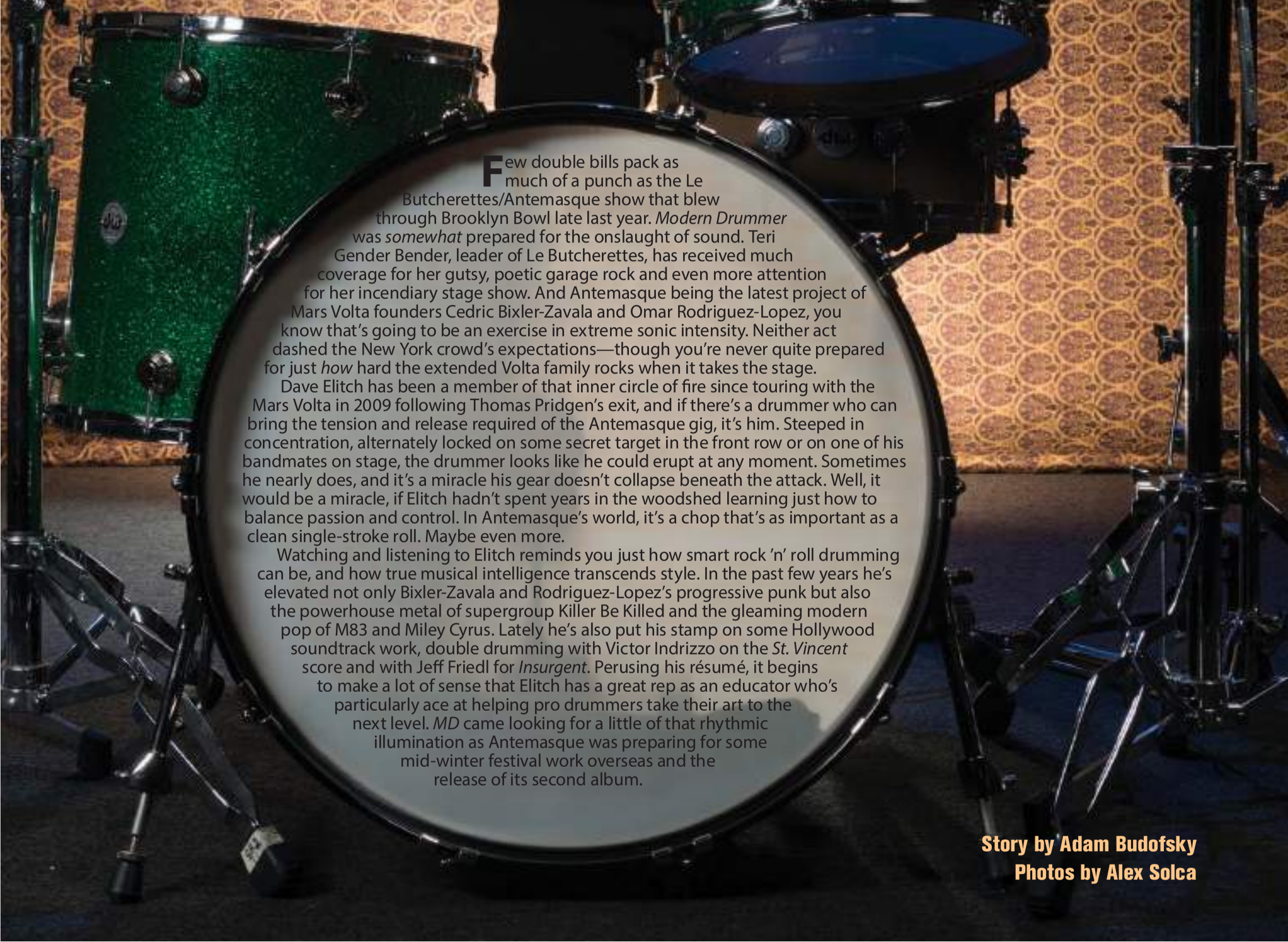
MD: You also challenge the traditional "seated drummer" concept more than most.

Daru: I saw showmanship at a young age. Even Dana Davis and those pocket drummers, they all had showmanship, something that was uniquely special. Being a fan of Gene Krupa, I liked watching him, because he was real animated. Steve Gadd is very animated. I'm doing it because that's what I feel. I feel like I become the drum. I want people to feel the vibrations that I'm feeling, so when I stand up and do it, I'm doing it because it's coming from the heart.

BLACK PANTHER
NEW DRUMS. NO JOKE.
VERSATUS
BY RUSSMILLER
With a balance of power and finesse, this one can handle it all. It possesses sensitivity for brushes, articulation for light sticking, and control for big back beats.
Size: 14" x 4 ⅜"
Material: Mahogany/Maple Hybrid Shell
Top Edge: Rounded and Reinforced 45°
Bottom Edge: Rounded 35°
Sound: Versatile, Articulate, Controlled
MAPEX
#PlayMore

Dave Elitch

Studious, worldly, insightful, yet betraying an appealing quality of easygoing dudeness that draws you into his world, Antemasque's drummer is the kind of guy you want on your team. Especially if your team is out for rock 'n' roll blood.

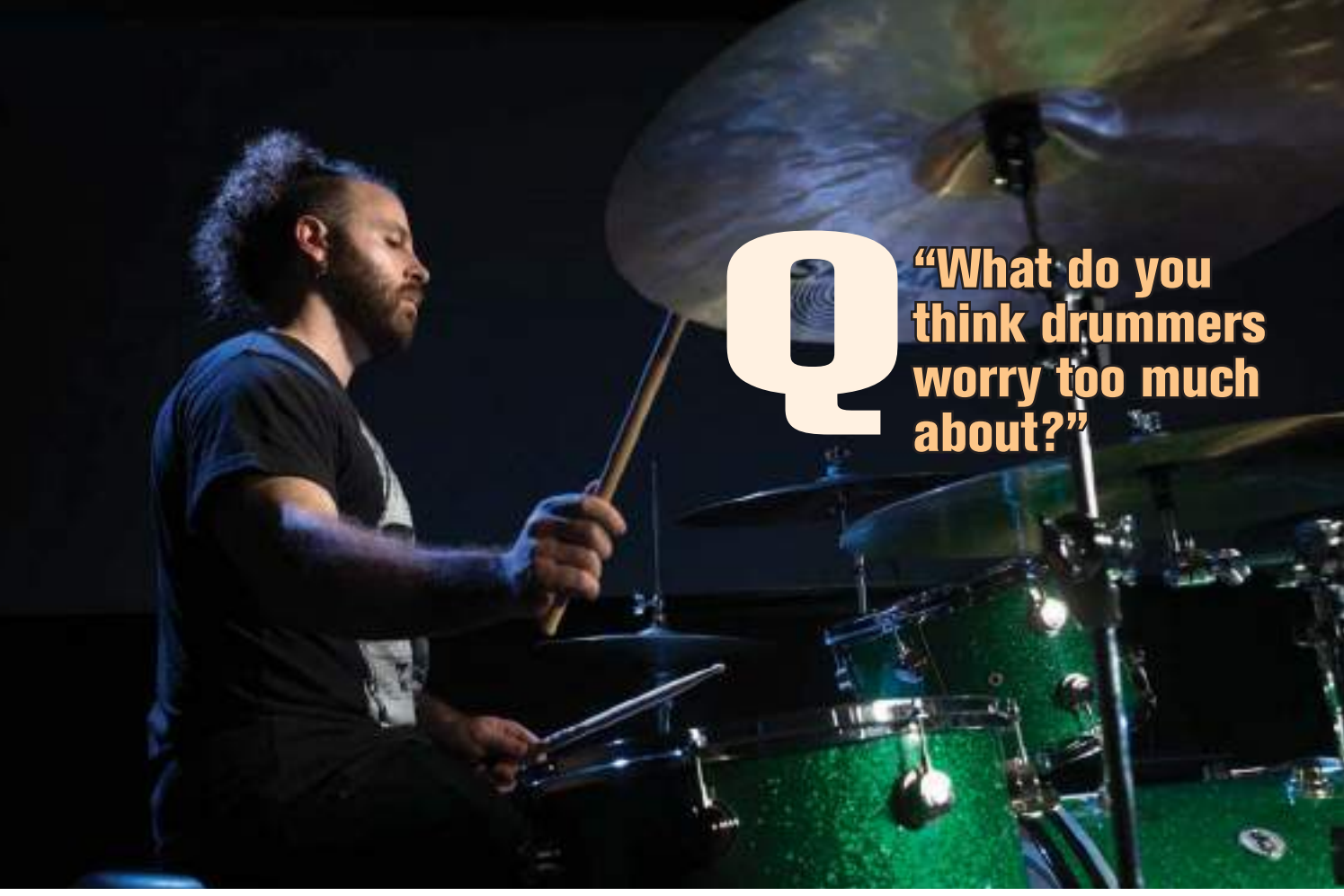


Few double bills pack as much of a punch as the Le Butcherettes/Antemasque show that blew through Brooklyn Bowl late last year. *Modern Drummer* was *somewhat* prepared for the onslaught of sound. Teri Gender Bender, leader of Le Butcherettes, has received much coverage for her gutsy, poetic garage rock and even more attention for her incendiary stage show. And Antemasque being the latest project of Mars Volta founders Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez, you know that's going to be an exercise in extreme sonic intensity. Neither act dashed the New York crowd's expectations—though you're never quite prepared for just *how* hard the extended Volta family rocks when it takes the stage.

Dave Elitch has been a member of that inner circle of fire since touring with the Mars Volta in 2009 following Thomas Pridgen's exit, and if there's a drummer who can bring the tension and release required of the Antemasque gig, it's him. Steeped in concentration, alternately locked on some secret target in the front row or on one of his bandmates on stage, the drummer looks like he could erupt at any moment. Sometimes he nearly does, and it's a miracle his gear doesn't collapse beneath the attack. Well, it would be a miracle, if Elitch hadn't spent years in the woodshed learning just how to balance passion and control. In Antemasque's world, it's a chop that's as important as a clean single-stroke roll. Maybe even more.

Watching and listening to Elitch reminds you just how smart rock 'n' roll drumming can be, and how true musical intelligence transcends style. In the past few years he's elevated not only Bixler-Zavala and Rodriguez-Lopez's progressive punk but also the powerhouse metal of supergroup Killer Be Killed and the gleaming modern pop of M83 and Miley Cyrus. Lately he's also put his stamp on some Hollywood soundtrack work, double drumming with Victor Indrizzo on the *St. Vincent* score and with Jeff Friedl for *Insurgent*. Perusing his résumé, it begins to make a lot of sense that Elitch has a great rep as an educator who's particularly ace at helping pro drummers take their art to the next level. *MD* came looking for a little of that rhythmic illumination as Antemasque was preparing for some mid-winter festival work overseas and the release of its second album.

Story by Adam Budofsky
Photos by Alex Solca



Q "What do you think drummers worry too much about?"

MD: In performance you look incredibly focused, but at the same time there's a kind of wildness bubbling below the surface. Is that something you're conscious of?

Dave: In high school I'd play along to Buddy Rich, Art Blakey, and Mahavishnu Orchestra, but at the same time I'd also be listening to Meshuggah and Pantera and Tool, and I got into those compressed, slammed snare drum sounds. I was trying to create the same sort of sound I was hearing on those records, so I ended up having a pretty heavy left hand because I was just trying to get it to sound the same, though I didn't know about compression or any of that stuff back then.

I also grew up playing along to Sevendust, Deftones, all of the late-'90s heavy/alt music that was popular then. I was huge into Morgan Rose and Shannon Larkin, and not only did I like the records, but I'd go and see them and they'd put on a *show*. I wanted to be visually entertaining too, so around 2006, 2007, when I was in the band Daughters of Mara, I'd videotape myself practicing the tunes. I'd think to myself, *I'm gonna go nuts this time*, and then I'd watch the video back and think, *There's really no discernable difference here.* [laughs] I realized then that the amount of extra energy you have to put in to make it visually obvious is much greater than you'd ever think it would be. So it was a conscious thing back then, but now I don't think about it much. It's just become how I play.

There are a few drum-cam videos of me playing with the Mars Volta in Australia, and I'm having a pretty good time. There's one of "Goliath," which got a fair amount of

Dave's Setup

Drums: DW Maple/Mahogany
A. 6.5x14 prototype thick-shell bell brass snare in shipwreck finish
B. 8x13 tom
C. 16x16 floor tom
D. 15x24 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 15" Artisan hi-hats
2. 22" prototype crash
3. 24" HHX Legacy Heavy ride
4. 21" prototype crash

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B or Rock model

Heads: Remo, including Coated Emperor or CS snare batter and Hazy Ambassador bottom, Clear or Coated Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter

Hardware: DW 9000 and 6000 series

attention, so I recently posted the remainder of the show. If I like the music I'm playing, I really get into it and start standing up and beating the hell out of everything.

Conversely, when I played with Miley, I had to think about so many different things—hitting the right pad at the correct time, production, visual cues, etc. Plus no one could see me, so it didn't matter. I didn't go that crazy in M83 either; I was just making sure I played all the parts right and the band gelled. With that said, there are definitely times when I consciously go nuts, so it's cool playing with Omar and Cedric, because they make an effort to put on a show as well, and I'm able to feed off that energy.

MD: Sometimes a drummer can go so far with the onstage antics that it's distracting.

Dave: Sure, that's why I don't spin my sticks or anything. I always thought that was super-goofy-looking. [laughs] But I do channel that emotion that made me like heavy music in the first place.

MD: In a previous interview, you said one of the things you like about the way Stacy Jones plays is that he hits hard but still grooves. Did you ever focus on that in your own playing?

Dave: Yeah, Stacy could be playing a ballad and just be crushing it, but it still feels good. He's got a nice lope to his playing. That's hard to pull off. He's played in arenas forever, which has something to do with it. But you don't want to go off too hard and have it adversely affect your sound and feel. That's the whole reason those Mars Volta drum-cam videos exist. I would set up a camera at every show and go back to my hotel room afterwards and watch the video for the express purpose of that. I would notice that I jumped off my throne there and everything stiffened up, or my time got wonky somehow. Even if you're playing to a click, your time can still stiffen up.

MD: You've developed a great reputation as a teacher. Let's talk about your own drum education.

Dave: I studied with Jason Gianni between sixteen and twenty years old. I grew up in Sebastopol, California, which is an hour or so north of San Francisco, and he was living in the Bay Area at the time. Jason was cool enough to drive up to my mom's house every two weeks, and he'd hang for two or three hours—super-generous with his time. We went through all the *Syncopation* and Alan Dawson stuff, *The New Breed*, poly-rhythms, Latin stuff…. Jason can teach anything, and he opened a lot of doors for me. There's a Remo video of me demonstrating some warm-up techniques on a pad, and I do this French finger thing. Everybody freaks out over that video, and Jason showed me how to do it back in the day.

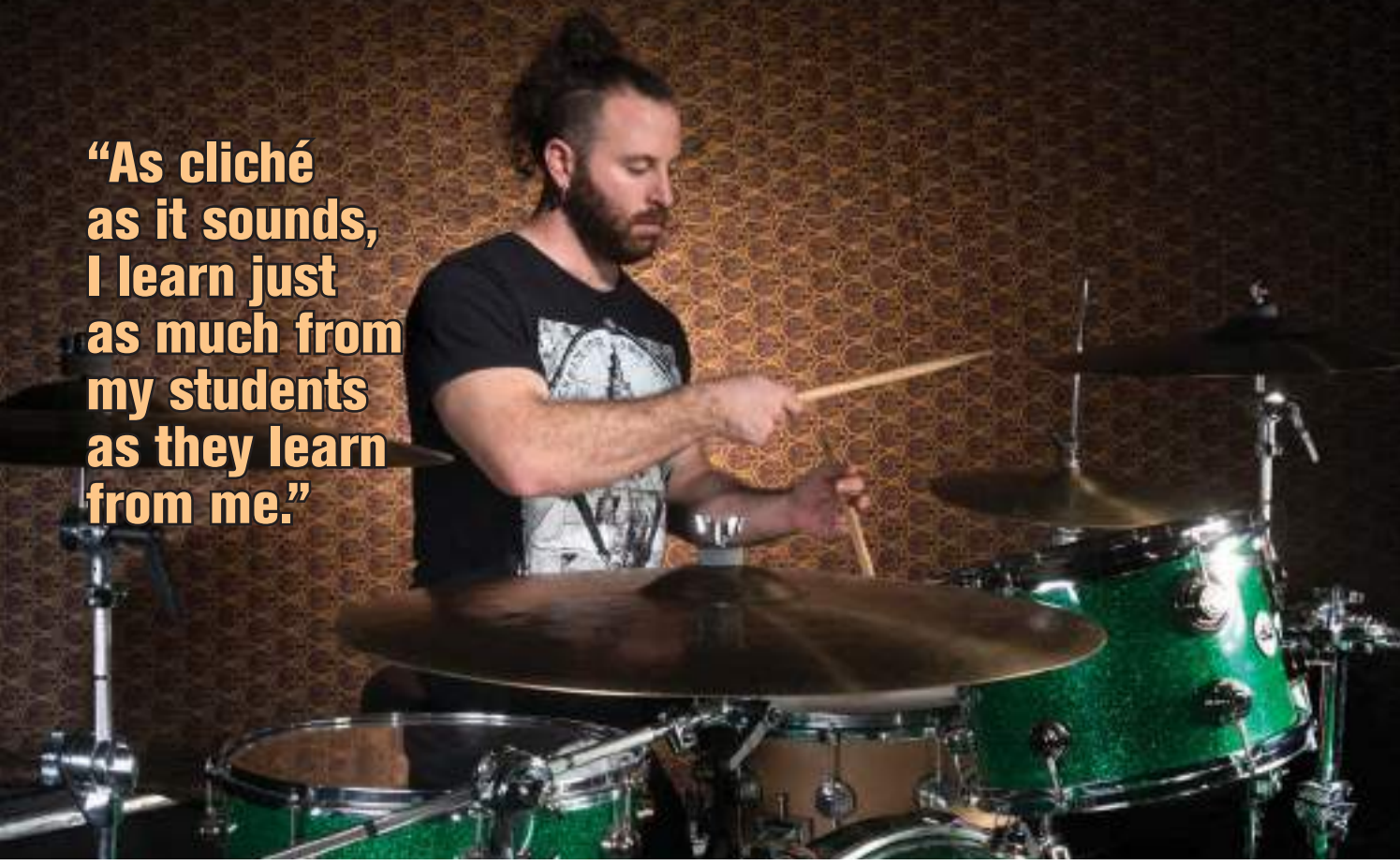
MD: Did you have other influential teachers?

Dave: I studied with a couple other teachers up there—Eric Weidenheimer was my first teacher, Rob Matteri after that, and this dude Dominick Godino, who's a jazz guy who had good traditional grip, so I got that from him. I took a lesson with Mike Mangini when I was seventeen, during a five-week summer performance program that I did to see if I wanted to go to Berklee. So I kind of just took bits and pieces from people.

MD: You mentioned traditional grip. Were there specific things you wanted to get out of it?

Dave: I grew up playing a lot of jazz, but I always played it matched. Obviously I saw dudes playing traditional, but I thought it was antiquated and not super-useful. Then, several years ago I started having people ask me to teach it to them. When you're playing traditional, your hand is underneath the stick and you're cradling it, and it's a much lighter, more delicate sound. So I ended up working on traditional grip

"Drummy stuff. When you take a step back, all of a sudden you're a *musician*."



because if I switch over I don't have to think about *not* doing rimshots—I just hit the drum and it's right in the center. If I'm doing a vibey thing that's low volume, I don't want to do rimshots. Playing a vintage drum with tape all over it, tuned down super-low, you don't want to do rimshots, because it won't sound good. You want to hit right in the center.

So, as I was teaching I would play traditional all day—I don't play that much when I teach; I mostly listen and talk—but after about a year or two it started to feel comfortable. It was a very slow, gradual build, but now I can play it pretty comfortably, and it's become another tool in my belt.

MD: How about other grips?

Dave: I've tried everything over the years, and I've formulated my approach by taking what works from others and leaving what doesn't. It all comes from learning how the body functions physiologically, physics, energy, and nature. Once you tap into these paths of least resistance, you'll feel it and it will all unfold in front of you.

My grip is nothing revolutionary. It's sort of similar to a Chuck Brown thing, like Bozzio and Mangini do. It's not super-common, but to me it makes the most sense. I don't have to ever change it. I mean, if I'm really slamming, my left stick will move in between my first and second knuckles of my index finger out of necessity, because I need more reinforcement to handle the extra energy coming back at me.

Something that I drill into people is that you work really hard in the shed, and when you play music, just play music. I don't care if you're holding the stick like a hammer, just play music and be in the moment. If you think about technique while you're creating something, it defeats the purpose.

MD: We recently ran a picture of Greg Saunier of Deerhoof where I'm not sure how the stick is staying in his hand.

Dave: I couldn't have come up with a better example of this concept. I saw Deerhoof when I was playing with Volta at the All Tomorrow's Parties festival in England in 2009. I had never seen them before, and I was like, *What is going on here?* Saunier's this lanky dude sitting way too low, and everything's positioned strangely—he's doing everything "wrong," but it sounds *awesome*. So in the end it's about what you're creating in the moment. If something gets screwed up and you're not super-efficient, who cares? You work on it and you do the best you can.

MD: Let's talk about the bass drum/snare drum relationship. On the Killer Be Killed record, there's a point to the bass drum sound, which marries it to the snare in a really nice way.

Dave: It's funny, I grew up playing a ton of double bass. I would spend hours in my mother's garage like I was in the gym, counting reps. I'd count a hundred reps on each cymbal—I had a lot of cymbals back then—and I'd do 16th notes for like an hour, just trying to get my speed up. But when I started working in L.A. years later, none of the gigs required double bass. So until I did the Killer Be Killed stuff, I hadn't used double bass in years. I'm sitting there tracking the record like, *My God—my left foot sucks*. I had to build that back up for sure. Creatively, I don't really hear double bass in my head anymore, and I didn't want to just be doing those lame quad fills all the time. I think there's one typical quad fill on that record, but I really went out of my way to not do that. People have been doing that for forty years; it's old and played out.

But in terms of the kick drum/snare relationship, that's the meat and potatoes of heavier music. I guess you could say that about all styles, but especially in heavier music. I'm always listening to the guitar and trying to go off what that rhythm is, and if there are vocals I'll play off them as well. When I did the Killer Be Killed record there were no vocals yet, so I was just trying to stay out of the way as much as possible for whatever the vocals were going to end up being.

MD: Who are some of your favorite players in terms of their bass drum/snare work?

Dave: Abe Cunningham has a beautiful way of coming up with these lyrical, hooky, cool beats. He's one of my all-time favorites.

There are so many Deftones songs where you can hear just the drum patterns and know what the song is. Jason Gerken from the band Shiner is another of my favorites.

MD: I'm not familiar with him.

Dave: Not a lot of people are, but you should check out this record called *The Egg*. That's the reason I had DW build me an acrylic kit, because he played a Vistalite kit on that record and I just lost my mind over it. He's kind of the archetype for me when someone says, "He plays a lot of interesting stuff but doesn't get in the way." Most of the time when people say that, it totally *does* get in the way and it's super-obnoxious, but he comes up with the coolest unorthodox grooves and fills, and it really doesn't get in the way at all.

MD: What do you think drummers worry too much about?

Dave: Drum shit. [laughs] Drummy stuff. Weirdly enough, once I started focusing on my drum tones about ten years ago…you start to pay attention to how the tones fit into a song and why those choices were made in the first place, and then you start thinking about the song and its structure, and then all of a sudden you think about the lyrics and how everything's fitting together. When you take a step back, all of a sudden you're a *musician*.

I think drummers have this huge tendency—myself included, for a long time—to think about everything from a drummer's perspective. Not always listening to things from a drummer's perspective is valuable and can be difficult to do. That's why someone like Steve Jordan works all the time, because he doesn't think like a drummer; he thinks like a producer.

MD: What was the concept going into the recording of the Antemasque album?

Dave: Omar and Cedric and I saw eye to eye in terms of writing the songs and recording them quickly—sometimes immediately. Usually I only played the song once. Sometimes we'd comp two takes together. I'm playing a tiny kit, tuned down and taped up, and it was just about getting the vibe of the three of us in the room. Sometimes Cedric would be doing scratch vocals in the room with us and it's bleeding into my drum take. Pretty low-fi garage-rock vibes.

MD: What are your thoughts on fills?

Dave: If you're playing a fill every two bars, they don't have a purpose any longer. I like it when I'm playing for the song and then do a fill where it wasn't expected, and they're thinking, *What was that?*

When we were playing in Germany, the Intersphere opened up for us, and their drummer, Moritz Müller, was incredible. I felt a connection to his approach. You'd never know what he's capable of, then every once in a while he'd throw in a fill and you're like, *What the…!*

Mario Calire is one of my best friends, and last night we were talking about the plethora of people doing the Bonham thing now. The whole point of making music and doing art is "This is me—this is how I interpret things," not "Hey, I'm doing the Bonham thing!" It seems so obvious to me, but I don't see a lot of people…I mean, my whole life I've tried to do something unique.

MD: You mentioned Bonham copycats and I immediately thought of the Bonzo Bash.

Dave: Oh, God, what a nightmare. [laughs]

MD: But it's cool to honor the greats, right? Is the problem a lack of people taking his ideas further?

Dave: That's what I'm saying. Bonham already did it; I don't want to hear your impression. And it's not about certain drummers not being great players, it's about who are *you*? I mean, I get the same feeling listening to "Fool in the Rain" as anyone else does, but no one else is going to do that as well as he did, so let it be. You'll do it more justice by not dragging it through the mud. Stop it. I'd much rather see someone attempt some new thing and fall flat on his face than rehash old stuff. Don't even get me started on that YouTube cover video nonsense!

MD: Are you being too hard on people?

Dave: No! [laughs] No, this stuff has bothered me since I was a little kid, so I don't feel bad about saying any of this. And for that matter, I might be harsh on people, but I'm also harsh on myself. I have very high standards, and I think you *have* to have high standards to be good at anything. A small amount of OCD doesn't hurt either. [laughs]

MD: You're known for teaching some established pros. Do you sometimes have to negotiate egos?

Dave: With the people I'm friendly with, it's never been difficult, but that possibility still exists. People like Dominic Howard from Muse, Eric Hernandez from Bruno Mars, Jason Sutter, Stacy Jones, Jeremy Stacey, Mario Calire, Michael Miley from Rival Sons—these dudes are good friends of mine, so it actually takes more on their end to say, "I know we're good friends, but I'm going to be respectful and we're going to do this thing and do it right." Because it can get brutal.

I mean, I'm not dismantling these people—well, sometimes I am, actually—but I'm trying to make it constructive, and it can be difficult at times, depending on the person. And these people have lived so much and done so much work that they understand what it is to do that. There have definitely been times when I've taught people that I don't know, and they go, "This is *really* hard," and then they never come back.

Heavy Sounds, Light Cymbals

For Dave Elitch, it isn't necessarily what you hit, it's the way you hit it.

"I tend to use pretty thin cymbals," Elitch says, "and I generally gravitate to big models. If you watch me play, it looks like I'm hitting really hard sometimes, but I'm just exaggerating the whole Moeller thing and I'm not actually hitting that hard in reality. Occasionally I am, but especially with thinner cymbals, I just have to get it started with my right hand, and then I'm just feathering it to keep it going. People say, 'Man, you must go through cymbals like crazy.' But I almost never break cymbals. I was in the rabbit hole for years learning how to do it correctly.

"I've used a lot of Sabian's Legacy cymbals with the Mars Volta and with Antemasque," Elitch continues. "Sometimes they're too thin and they disappear in a live setting, so you have to pay attention to that. But I don't really like thicker cymbals. The interesting thing is that you get these heavy cymbals and they don't flex, and they end up breaking. It's like when you have a die-cast hoop on a snare—sometimes you're knocking rods out of the snare left and right because the hoop doesn't flex. If you have a triple-flange hoop, which is much more bendable, it'll go with the tension of the drum."

Modern Drummer readers might have seen the videos Elitch recently did for Sabian, promoting the company's new Big & Ugly line. "I got a set of B8s on my tenth birthday, and I've never played anything else," Dave says. "It really is a dream come true to able to do this kind of stuff for Sabian. They're always down to experiment with new sounds, and I think that's really cool."

It just takes time. You're reprogramming all these neural pathways and synaptic connections. The hardest thing you can do as a human being is to unlearn something. You've made these giant freeways of neural networks that are deeply embedded, and you're trying to make these tiny new little pathways into the main arteries to be called upon. That requires a great deal of time, sensitivity, and incredible focus.

MD: What about when you teach younger players? Do you have strong feelings about when you should start working on certain things—grip, for instance?

Dave: It's changed a lot as I've taught more—I've been teaching for fifteen years—and I've relaxed a lot about it. I don't teach as many beginners as I used to, but when I do teach someone starting out I say, "This is how you hold a stick. Do the best you can, and every once in a while we'll check back in." We'll dive in when they're ready for it.

MD: Ideally, how much time in a day should be spent practicing?

Dave: I'm a big proponent of spending a small amount of time on something but being incredibly focused, taking breaks when you need to, and being goal oriented. A lot of people are time oriented, for instance: "I'm going to practice for three hours." That's totally arbitrary—what you get done in three hours might take five hours for someone else. It needs to be goal and task oriented. For example, "I'm going to get my single strokes up to 100 beats per minute and get them super-solid. Then I'm going to get page 16 in *The New Breed* up to 120. Then I get to play along to some songs and have fun to reward myself."

Another thing is, don't spread yourself too thin—maybe two or three topics total. Bite-size things. I'll tell people, "Work on this for five minutes, go have a sandwich, and come back and do five more minutes." You'll make a ton of progress that way. I've heard people say, "I'm working on my double strokes and watching a movie." How crazy is that? Now they're managing to do two things poorly—they're not doing their double strokes well, and they're not watching a movie well. So a lot of this stuff is about how you practice, not what you practice.

MD: Is part of being a successful student learning to be comfortable sounding bad at something for a while?

Dave: Yeah, that's everything. That's what separates the men from the boys, as they say. Obviously your natural ability plays into it; some people get it faster than others. But if you have a good work ethic, you'll always surpass those who have a natural ability but no work ethic.

MD: You need to have a great amount of trust in your teacher that the time spent will be worth it.

Dave: Sure. You have to see the look on some of these people's faces—*that's* how you hold the stick? Now, I had teachers who were like, "Do it this way," and I'd ask why. "Just do it!" "Oh, okay…" So whenever I go through this stuff with people, I make it a point to say, "Here's how you're currently doing it, and these are the reasons why it doesn't make sense." I never use the word *wrong* or *right*. I say, "This is why the way you're doing it is much less efficient than the way I'm doing it. You *could* go the rest of your life doing it your way, but you'll be getting five miles per gallon instead of thirty, or you could injure yourself."

MD: How has teaching served your playing?

Dave: To be a better teacher I have to think about different ways to convey things, because the way it makes sense to you might not be someone else's first inclination. The more I teach, the more perspectives I have on my relationship to the instrument. As cliché as it sounds, I learn just as much from my students as they learn from me.

MD: What are the most common themes you work on with drummers?

Dave: I can't tell you how many drummers' grip and time are good enough but they're not emoting anything. And that's because they're not going for a *sound*. They've never thought about what the snare drum sounds like. Most people come in and are hitting it two inches south of where they should be hitting it, or they're not doing a rimshot. The snare drum is the life force of the song. I put my whole existence into every backbeat. That's why I love Steve Jordan so much. Everything that dude plays on sounds good, and he has so many different ideas of what good is.

But the number-one thing I see that I need to correct, especially with pros, is hitting cymbals and snare drums as if they're several inches farther away from where they actually are. I always try to make sure my stroke is where it's supposed to be. I'm not pushing through something—that's not going to sound good, and you break things that way.

MD: Are there areas of drumming that you feel aren't being served by drum books, DVDs, schools, magazines, and so on?

Dave: That's a good question. I think I can address that globally, and this is coming from my being an educator. With all of these forms of education available these days—including some random video that some random person made on YouTube—you must question the source. You have some people teaching jazz like it's sixty years ago, which defeats the purpose of jazz entirely. The whole point of jazz is to push boundaries and be constantly evolving. You have guys saying, "Here's the swing pattern; play the hi-hat on 2 and 4…." and then you listen to a current guy like Jim Black or Dan Weiss or Mark Guiliana or Dave King, and those guys couldn't be further from that. I think there's a massive disconnect there.

I always shy away from the words *expert*, *master*, and *guru*, because the more you learn, the more you realize you have no idea what's going on. And the more you search, the more you realize that it's an endless endeavor for knowledge.

The Art of *Not* Drumming

Elitch on the nurturing nature of extracurricular activities

"Ever since I decided that I was going to be a drummer, I wanted to be the best I could possibly be, and I put all my faculties toward that. Eventually that can take a toll, so I kind of hit a wall and needed a break. I've always had an appreciation for art, and luckily where I live in L.A. there are all these rad galleries—the Getty, the Hammer, Thinkspace, C.A.V.E., Giant Robot—so I frequent those. I get a different vantage point on the creative experience. And I started getting inspired by documentaries about artists, like *The Radiant Child* about Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Rivers and Tides* about Andy Goldsworthy, the Gerhard Richter documentary *Painting*, Francis Bacon movies on YouTube…. It's just such a fascinating take on making sense of the world around you. Plus, I've dedicated my life to knowing all there is to know about drums, and I'm expected to know everything. With art, I can just go from my gut, so there's a huge sense of freedom and escape for me there."

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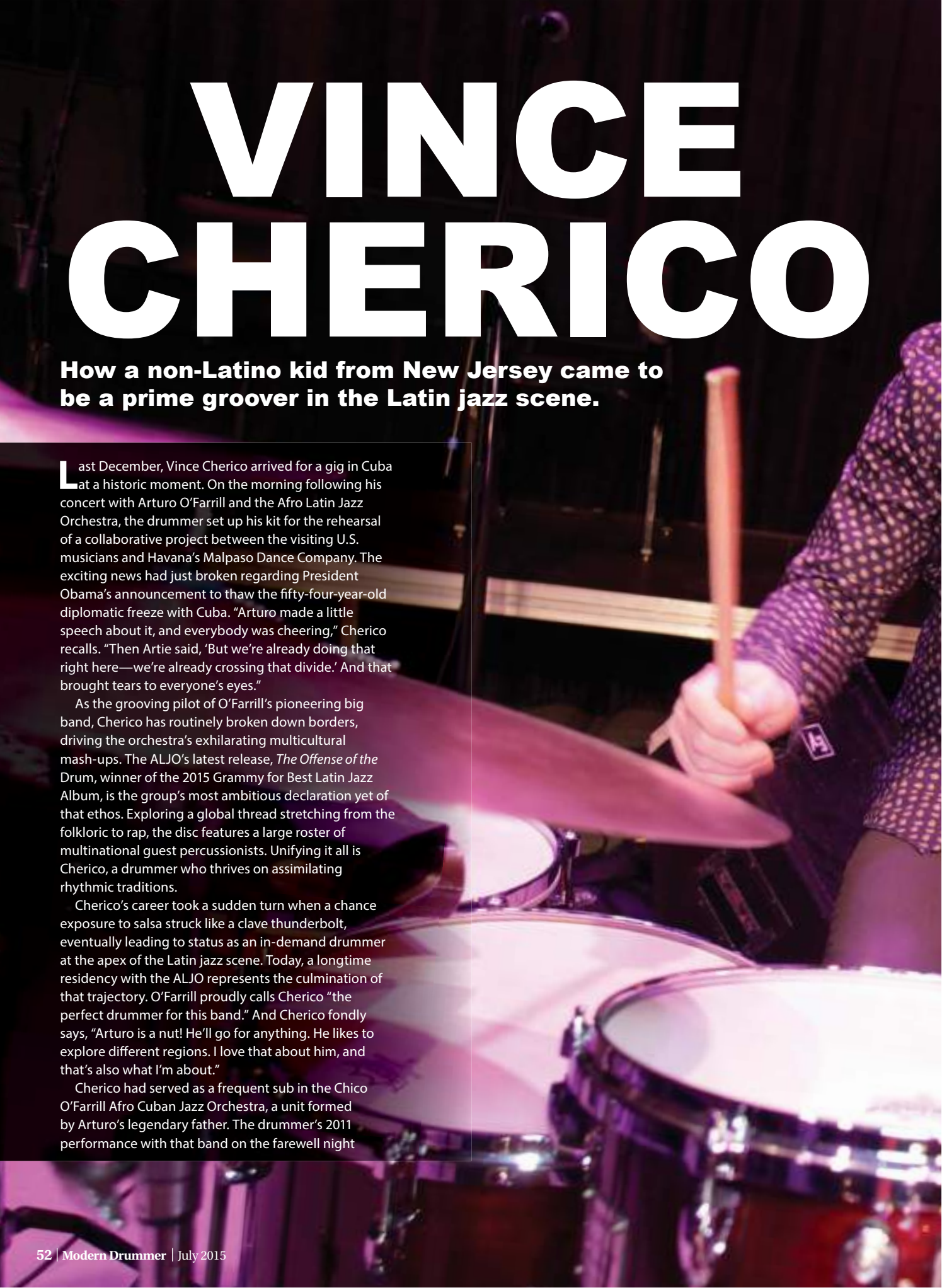
How a non-Latino kid from New Jersey came to be a prime groover in the Latin jazz scene.



Last December, Vince Cherico arrived for a gig in Cuba at a historic moment. On the morning following his concert with Arturo O'Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, the drummer set up his kit for the rehearsal of a collaborative project between the visiting U.S. musicians and Havana's Malpaso Dance Company. The exciting news had just broken regarding President Obama's announcement to thaw the fifty-four-year-old diplomatic freeze with Cuba. "Arturo made a little speech about it, and everybody was cheering," Cherico recalls. "Then Artie said, 'But we're already doing that right here—we're already crossing that divide.' And that brought tears to everyone's eyes."

As the grooving pilot of O'Farrill's pioneering big band, Cherico has routinely broken down borders, driving the orchestra's exhilarating multicultural mash-ups. The ALJO's latest release, *The Offense of the* Drum, winner of the 2015 Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album, is the group's most ambitious declaration yet of that ethos. Exploring a global thread stretching from the folkloric to rap, the disc features a large roster of multinational guest percussionists. Unifying it all is Cherico, a drummer who thrives on assimilating rhythmic traditions.

Cherico's career took a sudden turn when a chance exposure to salsa struck like a clave thunderbolt, eventually leading to status as an in-demand drummer at the apex of the Latin jazz scene. Today, a longtime residency with the ALJO represents the culmination of that trajectory. O'Farrill proudly calls Cherico "the perfect drummer for this band." And Cherico fondly says, "Arturo is a nut! He'll go for anything. He likes to explore different regions. I love that about him, and that's also what I'm about."

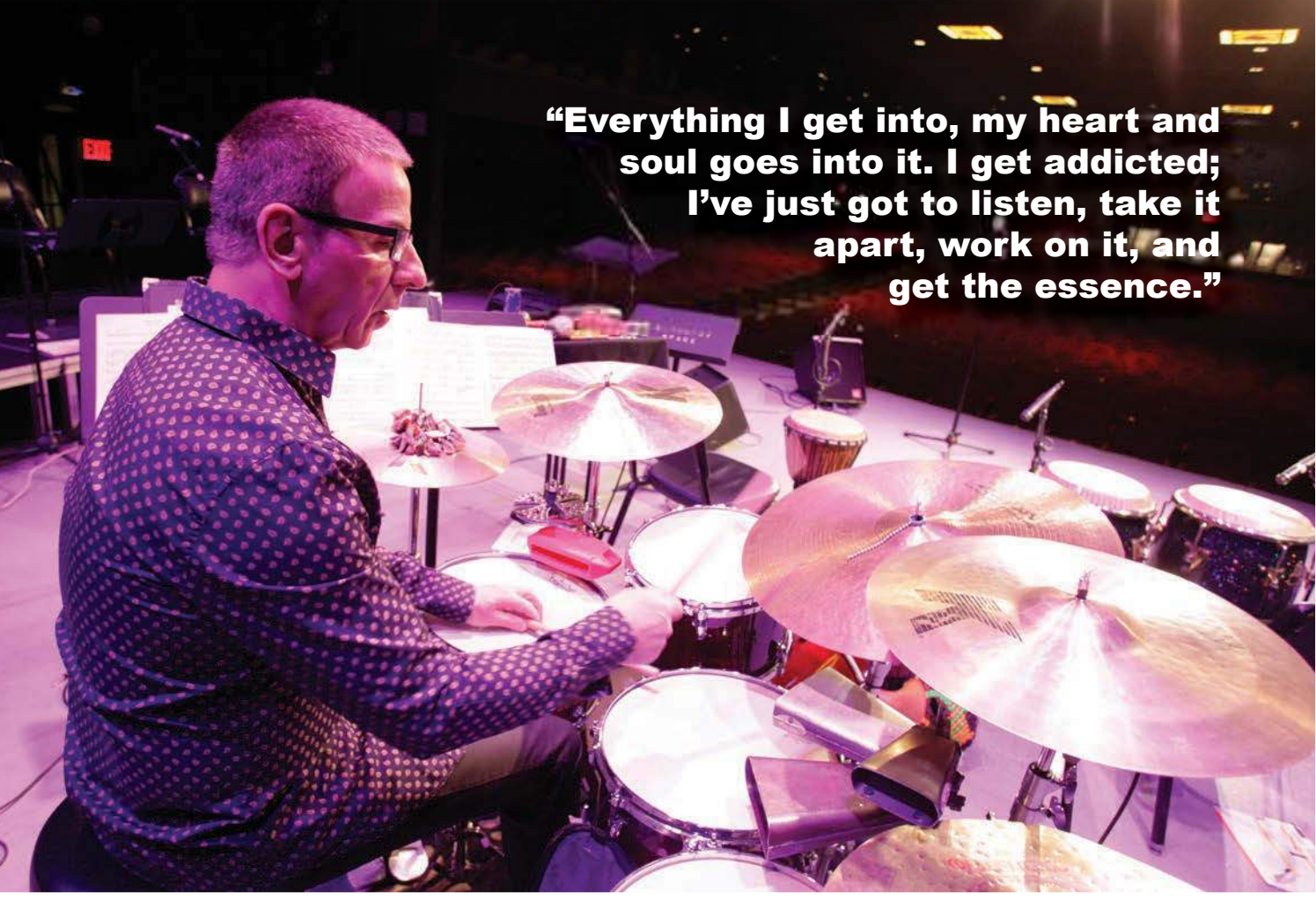
Cherico had served as a frequent sub in the Chico O'Farrill Afro Cuban Jazz Orchestra, a unit formed by Arturo's legendary father. The drummer's 2011 performance with that band on the farewell night

of a fourteen-year residency was captured for the recording *Arturo O'Farrill and the Chico O'Farrill Afro Cuban Jazz Orchestra: Final Night at Birdland*, which landed a 2014 Latin Grammy. In past years Cherico played on five other Grammy-nominated discs, scoring winners with the ALJO's *Song for Chico* (2008) and Ray Barretto's *Contact!* (1998).

Recent releases showcasing Cherico's wide palette include *Acid Mambo* by Chris Washburne & SYOTOS, a disc drawing on psychedelic rock; *Slink*, a Latin/jazz/Celtic mix by Auction Project; and *Mists: Charles Ives for Jazz Orchestra* by arranger Jack Cooper. Among the other notable acts that the energetic, globe-hopping drummer has performed and/or recorded with are the Caribbean Jazz Project, Dave Samuels, Paquito D'Rivera, Chembo Corniel, Diane Schuur, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Steve Kroon, Gato Barbieri, Jessica Simpson, and the Manhattan Transfer. Cherico also continues to teach at Queens College, Columbia University, and Drummers Collective.

A drummer of fluidity, fire, and physical ease, Cherico plays with balanced dynamics and a commanding yet sensitive touch. On and off the bandstand he exudes a disarming youthful enthusiasm. Recounting early tales of whuppings by stern bandleaders, Cherico punctuates his stories with a hearty laugh. A resilient spirit who loves to learn, he has clearly survived—even cherished—the rigorous lessons of tough love on the bandstand.

Story by Jeff Potter
Photos by Paul La Raia


"Everything I get into, my heart and soul goes into it. I get addicted; I've just got to listen, take it apart, work on it, and get the essence."

MD: In a July 2014 Different View interview with *Modern Drummer*, Arturo O'Farrill spoke about folkloric rhythms, saying, "It never sounds the same as when the cats play it—the guys who grew up listening and dancing to it, loving and living it." But you're his chosen drummer and a contradiction to that. So how does a non-Latino kid from Jersey end up a valuable player on the Latin jazz scene?

Vince: I was playing with a jazz-fusion group in New Jersey led by a vibes player named Bill Ware. He is also a bass player, and he started playing in a salsa band on the weekends to make a little extra gas money. He started writing and arranging for them, and he gave me a cassette and said, "Check this out. I want to start doing some of this stuff in our band."

As soon as I heard it, I was like, *Where have you been all my life?* This was around 1984. So I just started figuring this stuff out. When we started putting the Latin numbers into our group, Bill said, "Man, are you taking lessons on this? You picked it up really quick! Why don't you get some timbales, because the salsa band has gone through five timbale players in the last two months." Of course I said, "Come on, they're not going to let me." He said, "Get out of here—let's go!"

So I drove up to the Bronx and found an old set of wood Gon Bops [timbales] that were about two inches thick. I transcribed twelve tunes and went to the audition. I had no technique, but I was able to keep clave. I played, reading my charts. I made all the hits, and the leader was cracking up. He said, "You got the gig!"

My first gig with that band was a wedding. I set up early, and the leader walked in and said, "What are you doing? Why are you back there?" I said, "Well, that's where a drummer sets up." "No! No!" he said. "The percussionist is out *front*; the *horns* are in the back." I thought, *Oh no, I'm not ready for this. I want to hide away!* But I started playing all these little jobs and I just loved it, loved the music so much.

I got so much support from the Latino community. These little clubs were mom-and-pop places: grandparents, parents, and little kids were all there, out for a Saturday night. There was food, rum and Coke, beers…. It was all about socializing and dancing. Of course, everybody totally knew I was not Latino—even though I did have a mustache at the time. [laughs] They'd come up and say, "Hey, man, I like what you're doing, but let me just show you something…."

MD: Fellow musicians?

Vince: No, the patrons! It's kind of like Brazil—everybody can play some pandeiro. Everybody knew something about timbales. I'd be getting a lesson from I-don't-know-who, and by the time the band's getting back from their break, I'm thirsty and it's too late, but wow! This went on and on like that, and I was amazed.

In another instance, I was playing with a band up in the Catskills one summer, and a great percussionist came up to sub on bongos. I was very intimidated, because this guy is an amazing timbale player who worked with top salsa bands. He was playing bongos next to me and I was standing up, playing timbales. It was hot and we were all wearing shorts on an afternoon gig. I did some stupid drummer-concept thing on timbales—taking a fill as if I was going around the

RECORDINGS

Arturo O'Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra The Offense of the Drum /// **Jack Cooper** Mists: Charles Ives for Jazz Orchestra /// **Ray Barretto** Homage to Art, Time Was—Time Is /// **Marty Sheller Ensemble** Why Deny //// **Tina May** Sings the Ray Bryant Songbook

toms on kit. He took out the bongo bell stick, which is about one inch thick, and *whacked* me on the side of the leg: "I *told* you not to do that!" [laughs] My whole leg was black and blue that weekend. But if he didn't care, he wouldn't have said a word.

For over a year I was playing more timbales than anything. My first love was jazz and even Brazilian music, which I got turned on to very young. But at a certain juncture, while learning all the Latin stuff, I'd go to a jazz gig and the guys would say, "What's happened to you? Last week you sounded like Billy Hart on drums. What's going on?" So I started re-listening to Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Philly Joe…. Then I'd get to the Latin gig and they'd say, "What's going on with you?" I couldn't figure out doing both at the same time.

MD: Were the feels conflicting with each other? I'd assume one would enhance the other.

Vince: Exactly. But there was a period where I was freaked out, wondering if this would ever settle so I could do both.

MD: Many other drummers have studied Latin rhythms but not truly grasped the feel. What clicked for you?

Vince: It's just something that rang true with me. I was fortunate that it made sense to me. I used to play with Bill Ware on the street. He played montunos with four mallets on vibes. I tried to stretch every way I could, because what do you have to lose on the street? After four or five months of doing that, we were playing a Latin number and all of a sudden I did some crazy fill. And when I came out of it, I knew just where the clave was. It was a eureka moment. From that day, things started to change. I've been told by Latin musicians that my clave concept is in there now as if I was born with it. That was my passport.

MD: Joining Ray Barretto's band in 1995 was a big breakthrough that raised your career profile.

Vince: Ray was a mentor and almost a second father who busted my ass like crazy. I played with him for eleven years. He was an intense and amazing guy, and it was a great learning experience. At the same time, we periodically had fights off stage. He'd be cursing at me because I'd say, "Okay, Ray, we need to stretch this, take this somewhere else."

One time we hit a section where the piano player came in and the bass player and I just felt it was a good place to let it ring and allow him to open it up and build something. We thought Ray saw that. But he kept playing the congas. Then he freaked out, stopped, and got embarrassed. On the break he started screaming at me. I just had to say, "Ray, you wanna talk the talk of jazz, you gotta walk the walk!" [laughs]

MD: That's a special relationship—to be able to say that to your boss.

Vince: Yeah. When he passed away his wife told me, "He loved you the most. But you gave him heartache!" It was a good thing.

MD: You've worked with many other Latin-percussionist legends, including Carlos "Patato" Valdes, Mongo Santamaria, Candido, and Giovanni Hidalgo. *That's* an education.

Vince: Also, there's an amazing famous timbale player named Nicky Marrero who was in the Fania All-Stars in the '70s. He was one of my mentors back in the day. I played little clubs in the Bronx, and he would always be there. After, we'd hang out in my car until four or five in the morning, listening to music and talking. Early on, Nicky was watching me playing drums with

VINCE'S SETUP

Drums: Yamaha Absolute Maple Custom in cherry wood
A. 6.5x14 Craviotto solid-shell walnut/maple/walnut snare with die-cast hoops
B. 8x12 tom
C. 14x14 floor tom
D. 16x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 15" K Light hi-hats
2. 19" K Dark Thin crash
3. 6" Factory Metal Street FX Cross Crasherz
4. 22" Kerope prototype ride (2,680 grams)
5. 18" K Dark Medium Thin crash
6. 20" Oriental Crash of Doom with 11" K Custom Hybrid splash stacked on top

Percussion: LP
aa. Aspire Timbale cowbell (played with foot)
bb. Jam Block Medium
cc. Salsa Timbale cowbell
dd. Salsa Bongo cowbell
ee. Salsa Cha Cha cowbell (high pitch)
ff. 6.5x13 Tito Puente brass timbale

Additional percussion: LP congas, bongos, and bronze timbales; J. Leiva Omeya Travel cajon; goat-hoof rattle (on hi-hat); various world percussion

Hardware: Yamaha 800 series hardware and LP cowbell percussion clamps

Heads: Remo, including Coated Ambassador snare batter and Hazy Diplomat bottom, Coated Ambassador tom batters and Clear Diplomat bottoms, Coated Ambassador bass drum batter and Coated Powerstroke 4 Yamaha-logo front head, and Coated Ambassador timbale batter

Sticks: Vic Firth, including SZ sticks (or STR, 8DN, or TMB2 models), Heritage and Legacy brushes, Rute 505, and T6 and SD6 mallets

Accessories: Vic Firth VicKick felt and fleece beaters and VicPack backpack; MONO M80 cymbal case, snare case, and Studio stick bag

a little band, and he started *screaming* in my ear, "Play congas! Play congas!"

On the break I said, "Nicky, there's already a conguero here." He said, "I know. But *you* have got to learn congas. Get into 'playing them' on the drumset." You see, I already had experience playing timbales, and many musicians said that I played drumset more like a timbalero. So at that point, Nicky was saying, "Stop thinking only like a timbale player. Get more into the drumset. Utilize more of the folklore of the congas, and that will deepen your drumming."

So I started asking conga players to show me everything. And it did deepen my knowledge. Then, when I played with conga players, they loved me. So many of them had previously run into drummers who only wanted to run the show—take all the glory. But my attitude was, "No, man, I want to *mesh* with you."

MD: Arturo O'Farrill formed the ALJO to launch a prestigious residency at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Many top drummers had their names in the pool. He chose you. Why?

Vince: To be honest, I was a little dumbfounded, because this was JALC. I didn't think too much about it, but I did realize that I wasn't born in Cuba or Puerto Rico. My part-Italian blood is as close as I get! But Arturo had the belief and faith in me. I wasn't the very first drummer, but I joined at the end of 2004, just in time for the grand opening of JALC.

On one level, it was important that I'd had big band experience with jazz groups. My personal philosophy comes from the band's actual name; Arturo named it perfectly. I have to be able to kick a big band as well as have all those other styles under my belt. It's a constantly revolving word game with these elements.

On top of that, I've had so many varied experiences along the way—Peruvian music, for example. The band worked with Gabriel Alegria, and the first time we played Peruvian music, I think Arturo had no idea. But I had been playing Peruvian music for ten years with little groups and did a couple records. So when Gabriel came in, he was kind of shocked that I not only knew the music but knew it on a very deep level. Everything I get into, my heart and soul goes into it. I get addicted; I've just got to listen, take it apart, work on it, and get the essence.

MD: *The Offense of the Drum* is the band's most cutting-edge, multicultural mix yet. How did you approach it?

Vince: I'm always looking to interact, but foremost I take my role as a big band, orchestra drummer: I want to drive the bus and make everyone comfortable, *especially* on this record, because we had Colombian musicians, African djembe, Japanese taiko drummers, and others. So I check my ego at the coat closet. You have to serve the music.

MD: Were there any new stylistic challenges you needed to grasp?

Vince: On the piece "Mercado en Domingo" by Pablo Mayor, the style was porro. Pablo was emailing me sound samples, giving me ideas in rehearsals. Even though I play cumbia, the more I check out Colombian music, the more I realize I don't know. There's so much going on from different parts of the country. While I was playing it, I could see Pablo thinking, *That's not it yet.* So I kept digging deeper, researching it. A big goal for me was to adapt it for drumset in a way that also honors the folkloric tradition.

MD: "They Came" is a departure, including rap and DJ Logic on turntables.

Vince: I have high praise for [arranger/composer] Jason Lindner. That really takes you on a journey. In one section he wanted me to play a Skrillex/Pitbull kind of groove—but on an acoustic kit, getting the vibe of it.

MD: Since you entered Latin music via timbales, drumming behind Tito Puente must have been a momentous full-circle experience.

Vince: It was an amazing lesson. I worked with him a few times, but the most memorable was my first time, at the Plaza Hotel, when he was a guest artist. I was introduced to Tito while I was loading my drums in. I shook his hand. He looked me right in the eye and said, "They tell me you're good. We'll see." And he walked away! [laughs]

In the second set, when Tito came on, I realized I had contemplated this moment on the drive there: *Man, I'll be playing with Tito Puente! What am I gonna do?* But then it occurred to me: *What am I NOT going to do?* I said to myself, *Vince, you're NOT going to take a fill.*

So for Tito's whole set I basically played a hi-hat thing that imitates maracas, and once or twice, as the set went on, I could see when Tito wasn't going to do something, and I hit a crash cymbal, because I knew the tune. But I just watched him the whole time.

At the end he came right over to me, reached over the rack tom, shook my hand, and said, "I like you. You didn't get in my way." That was it. And he walked away! A friend in the band said, "Vince, great job, and let me just tell you this: You just got the biggest compliment Tito Puente will give any musician."

Bobby Rodriguez was on bass—he had played on all the great Tito records. He called me over and said, "We've had a lot of drummers do this chair, and every one of them had to show off. You respected Tito, and that's his biggest compliment. Forty-five years ago, I did my first gig with that man. At the end, he told me the same thing. And you know what I told him? 'Well, you sure got in *my* way, muthaf----!'And I've played with him ever since." [laughs]

That's some real *old school* stuff. These things get into your bloodstream, into your psyche. As I've moved forward, I'm so glad to have these experiences for a reference.

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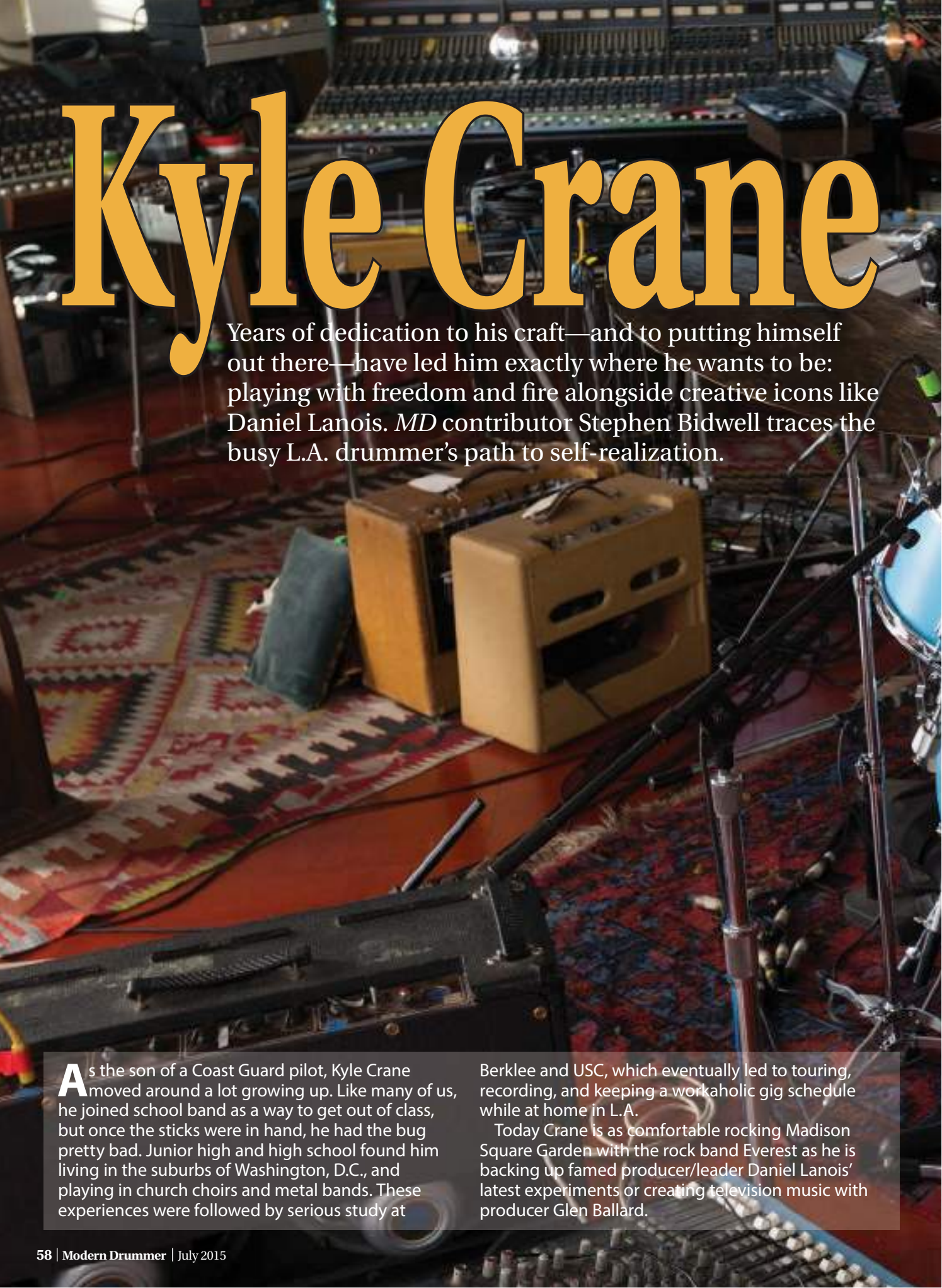
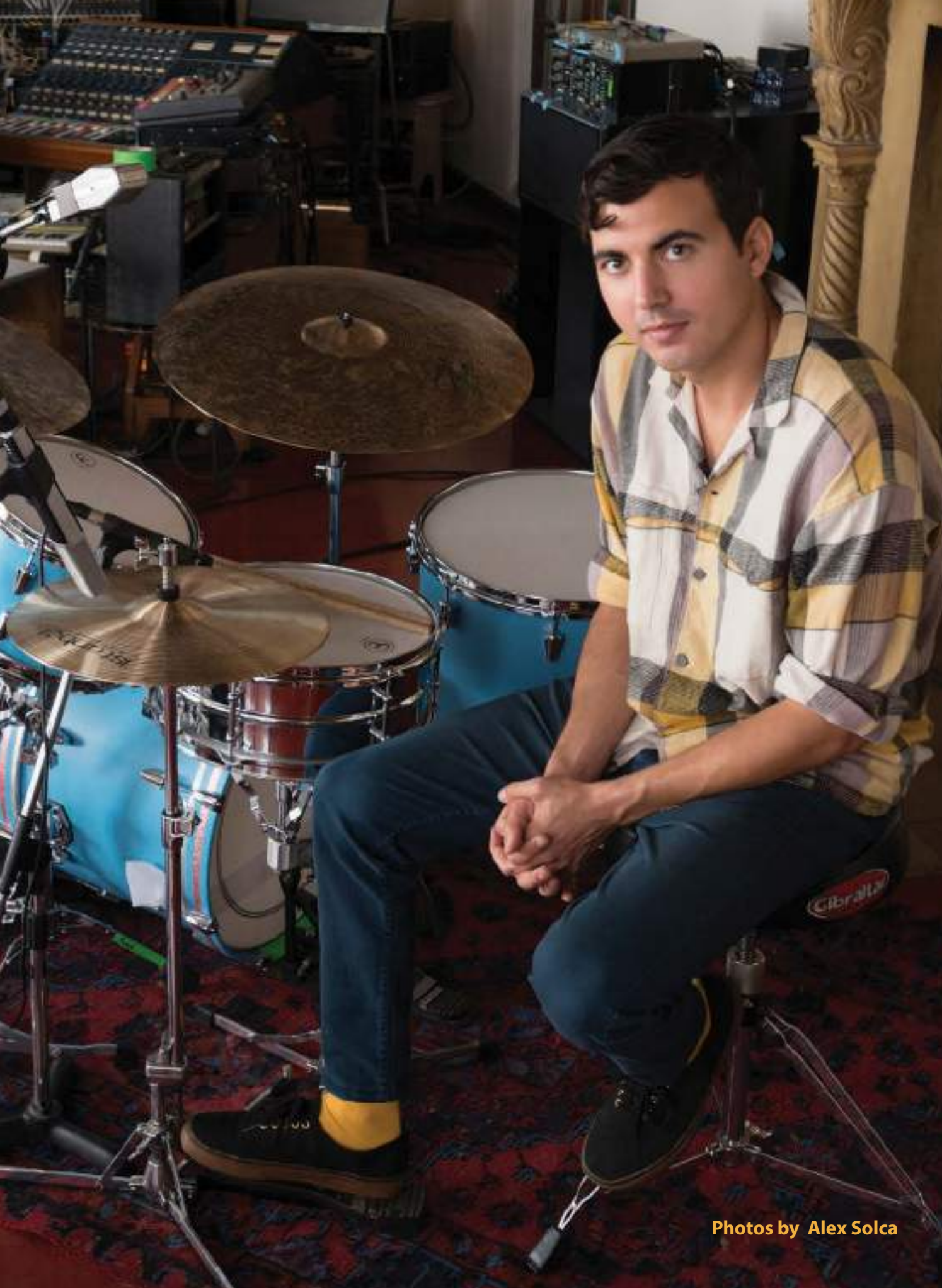
Kyle Crane

Years of dedication to his craft—and to putting himself out there—have led him exactly where he wants to be: playing with freedom and fire alongside creative icons like Daniel Lanois. *MD* contributor Stephen Bidwell traces the busy L.A. drummer's path to self-realization.



As the son of a Coast Guard pilot, Kyle Crane moved around a lot growing up. Like many of us, he joined school band as a way to get out of class, but once the sticks were in hand, he had the bug pretty bad. Junior high and high school found him living in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., and playing in church choirs and metal bands. These experiences were followed by serious study at Berklee and USC, which eventually led to touring, recording, and keeping a workaholic gig schedule while at home in L.A.

Today Crane is as comfortable rocking Madison Square Garden with the rock band Everest as he is backing up famed producer/leader Daniel Lanois' latest experiments or creating television music with producer Glen Ballard.



Photos by Alex Solca

MD: So it seems we were at the same Terry Bozzio clinic in Sterling, Virginia, back around 1998.

Kyle: When I was thirteen, my first teacher, Brian Pentony of the Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, gave me a ticket and said, "It's crazy—he's got like a fifty-piece drumset!" I sat right in front and it completely blew my mind; I never knew that someone could just play solo drums. Bozzio inspired me to start composing my own beats, so that opened up a whole thing. I saw Dennis Chambers at the same store a couple of months later, so he also became a big influence.

MD: As a teenager in the D.C. suburbs, you took lessons and played in metal bands.

Kyle: I also played in three different church bands. That was a nice outlet, because these older guys would tell me I was rushing or dragging, and I'd be like, "I don't know what that means!" But they slowly showed me the way. That was a pretty big part of learning how to play with a group.

MD: How did you end up at Berklee?

Kyle: I was in jazz band during senior year of high school, and I hadn't put a ton of thought into what I was going to do for college. But my mom heard about Berklee and signed me up for a three-day percussion festival there. They had the schedule loaded with master classes from 7 A.M. until midnight. After that it was the only school I applied to.

MD: What was your experience there?

Kyle: I went to one party that whole four years; the rest of the time I was in the

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The kit Crane used during our photo shoot at Daniel Lanois' home studio is a C&C set with maple/gum shells in tweedy blue finish. It features an 8x12 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x20 bass drum, plus a 5x14, 6-lug C&C chrome-over-brass snare with a George Way throw-off. When Crane went on tour with Lanois this spring, he played the same kit, but with a 15x24 bass drum. His Istanbul Agop cymbals include 15" Traditional Light hi-hats, a 22" OM ride, and a 24" Signature ride. He uses Remo heads.

practice room. My jazz knowledge was kind of limited when I got there, so I had a lot to work on. My first semester I studied with Rod Morgenstein, because I was still very into metal, but then I started studying with Terri Lyne Carrington, and she was a big influence, because the way she thought about jazz made sense to me. When we'd work on up-tempo, burning jazz tunes, she would talk about comping as just playing hip-hop without ever hitting the backbeats. Before that, for some reason I didn't realize that after a certain speed, everything straightens out.

MD: And after Berklee you went to USC?

Kyle: I spent almost a year in Boston just playing and teaching, and then I auditioned for USC and went to L.A. I went pretty briefly, because I started getting some touring opportunities, but I studied with Peter Erskine and Aaron Serfaty while I was there.

MD: You seem to be incredibly busy. How did you network yourself when you got out to L.A.?

Kyle: When I got out here I thought, *I need to play as much as possible. That way as many people as possible can see me.* I would just pop into hotels, restaurants, and bars and try to get a gig. Now I have six steady gigs a week, and other stuff will fill in. Every time I play it's an advertisement. That's how I met Daniel Lanois, and that's how I met Everest.

MD: You've said that you thought Lanois was just a regular at one of your gigs until you were introduced. What is it like working with him on his own music?

Kyle: Dan is like a musical shaman. You remember everything he says. He will amp you up before, during, and after a show like a boxing coach. He literally lets me play anything I want at the shows, and I get to change it every night. It's liberating.

MD: You've also been in the studio with Glen Ballard.

Kyle: He has a couple of projects currently where he put together a band to play tunes he's written in conjunction with TV shows that are being developed. I can't really say much more than that due to nondisclosure agreements, but we do live shows, and hopefully the TV thing will get running. You never know in L.A., because everyone's making pilots left and right.

MD: You've also backed up some mainstream pop acts, like Crystal Bowersox and Bridgit Mendler.

Kyle: Yeah, I was Crystal's drummer and music director for about a year. It was cool playing with Rickey Minor and the cats from the *Tonight Show* band, as well as [guitarist/pianist] Brian Green from Montë Mar.

MD: And Montë Mar is your alt-pop project of original music?

Kyle: Yeah, we finished a new full-length record, and we're seeing if any labels want to put it out. If nobody's interested we'll just release it ourselves. We still play around, but the singer tours with John Legend and Michael Bublé, so he's pretty busy. This year nobody's schedules have really lined up to play much, but when we release the record we'll get back into playing.

MD: How did you end up recording with Dale Crover and Coady Willis from the Melvins?

Kyle: Joe Plummer [Modest Mouse, the Shins, Cold War Kids] contacted me about an all-drum album he was making for Joyful Noise records. I played voodoo drum and frame drum with Dale and Coady, and then there's one song where we all trade. We had four drumkits set up in the room, and we all did drastically different little solos. I did more of a jazzy vibe, and the other guys played more bombastic things on their huge kits.

MD: You also recorded with Kanye West.

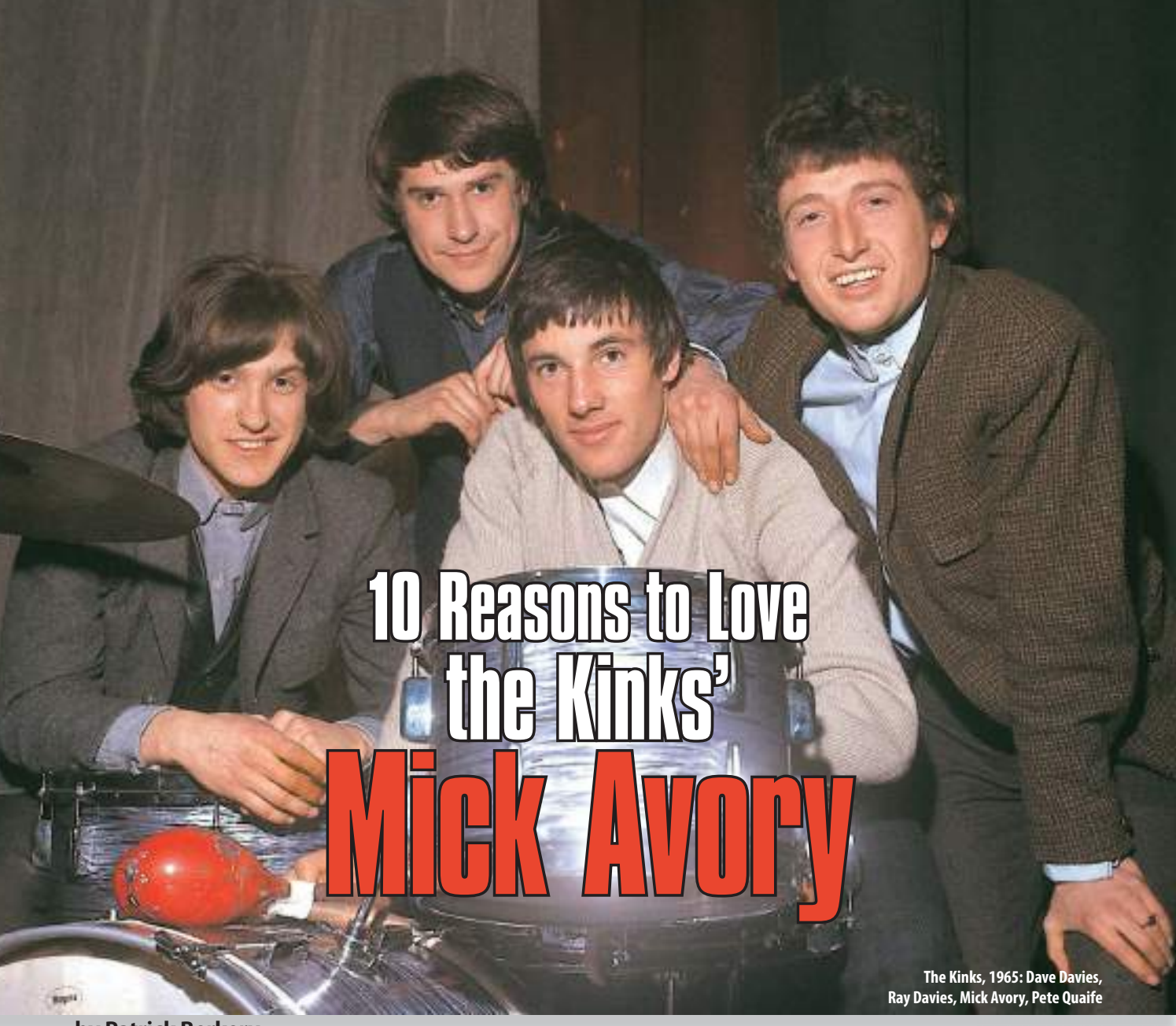
Kyle: Kanye signed an MC named Really Doe to his label. I played drums on four tracks of Really Doe's album. That was one of the first sessions I did when I got out here, and it was a pretty memorable experience. I showed up and there was a Victoria's Secret model sitting on the couch, a pit bull lying behind the soundboard, and a bunch of rappers in the studio playing *Madden*. But I did a bunch of loops for them to chop up and use, and then I played on top of four tracks on the record.

MD: There's a video on YouTube of you and keyboardist Sam Barsh where you play a J Dilla–esque beat. Is that something you've checked out much?

Kyle: You'll be on a gig and somebody will suggest, "Let's do this tune, but with a J Dilla beat." That's become a thing that people reference, to not play so rigid—you know, just throw their own stank on it. I think I learned a lot playing with people who know that style, but it wasn't until recently that I actually looked up some J Dilla stuff, just to see what it was about.

MD: It can be demanding on a drummer to try to play what people want to hear yet also have your own sound.

Kyle: Seeing virtuosic drummers all the time, it's easy for me to get depressed about my sound. But after working with Dan Lanois, I started to realize that I don't have to be anyone else. On a gig like his, where you're improvising the entire time, it's easy to listen back and hear things that I wish I did or didn't do. But Dan gives me the freedom to let go and have no regrets.



10 Reasons to Love the Kinks' Mick Avory

The Kinks, 1965: Dave Davies, Ray Davies, Mick Avory, Pete Quaife

by Patrick Berkery

Had it been Mick Avory, not British session ace Bobby Graham, playing on iconic early Kinks singles like "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night," and had the group not been barred from touring the U.S. from 1965 to 1969 due to disputes with the American Federation of Musicians, then Avory, the band's drummer from 1964 to 1984, might enjoy the same universal recognition as British Invasion contemporaries including Ringo Starr, Keith Moon, and Charlie Watts.

He's certainly worthy of it. After producer Shel Talmy deemed the drummer (initially more of a jazz player with a light touch, by his own admission) ready for studio duty, and when the Kinks finally got back in front of American audiences, Avory showed he could bash with the best of them. And as Ray Davies' songwriting evolved beyond the garage-y sound of those early sides, Avory's effortless swing, tasteful chops, and creative touches were crucial in allowing the imaginative storyteller and melody merchant to explore more sophisticated pop song forms.

"I don't know if Ray's writing blended into my way of playing or if I blended into the way he was writing," Avory tells *Modern Drummer* from his home in England, where he still performs regularly with other former Kinks in a unit called the Kast Off Kinks. "We just developed great empathy for each other's playing as a unit. If it never got beyond the hard-hitting things, I wouldn't have been very suitable. But then Ray started writing more subtle stuff, and that suited my style better."

Despite teases from Ray and his lead-guitarist brother, Dave Davies, the Kinks' fiftieth anniversary came and went in 2014 without a reunion—something Avory feels he likely wouldn't be a part of anyway, due to his famously combustible relationship with Dave. "I've had email discussions with Dave," Mick says. "I gather he'd rather just do it with Ray and whoever they can muster to do the rest of the band."

The milestone anniversary did bring an extensive reissue and compilation campaign, reminding us of Ray Davies' brilliance as a songwriter, the power of the Kinks as a band, and the artistry of Avory's drumming—a vastly undervalued commodity of the British Invasion and classic-rock eras. We spoke with Avory about some of his finest moments with the group.

"Ev'rybody's Gonna Be Happy" (1965)

One of the few early singles to feature Avory, this frantic blast of Mod-ish pop was a result of the Kinks' touring with Motown singer Kim Weston, whose band featured drummer Uriel Jones. "We watched him every night," Avory recalls. "He had such a great sense of rhythm and placed the notes nicely." The influence is evident here as Avory grooves hard and fast in the verses, placing the snare on beat 2 and the "&" of 3 and 4, against washy hi-hats and Pete Quaife's descending bass line. When he snaps off those quick snare rolls in the choruses, you wonder why Avory wasn't used by Shel Talmy on all Kinks session dates back then.

"Holiday in Waikiki" (1966)

Avory taps into his jazz roots on this Polynesian-flavored shuffle, which opens and closes with a floor tom pattern similar to Gene Krupa's tom thumping on "Sing, Sing, Sing"—a lick repurposed from a cover in the band's early repertoire. "We used to play Slim Harpo's 'Got Love If You Want It,' and that was played on a floor tom with a handkerchief to muffle the sound a bit," Avory explains. "Ray said, 'Do something like that,' and it worked quite well." Also working well here: Avory snapping off more quick snare rolls without disrupting the song's infectious bounce.

"Harry Rag" (1967)

A variation on a march pattern Avory learned from a Buddy Rich rudiment book features in the verses of "Harry Rag," which falls somewhere between a sea shanty and a British music hall track. Avory clearly knew his way around a march, but the part doesn't sound too polished—it's definitely got a several-pints-in feel. "The march I'm playing is probably not technically great," the drummer says, "but it fits the mood of the song. I was just looking for the general feel. We always went on feel."

"Lazy Old Sun" (1967)

With its guitar drones, trippy brass lines, choral backing, and tumbling toms, "Lazy Old Sun" is about as psychedelic as the Kinks get. Loud shakers dictate the meter as Avory darkens this minor-key treasure by playing the snare with the snares off. "A lot of Ray's songs [of that era] needed a more gentle treatment, at least something different," Mick says. "Playing the groove with the snares off gave it that lazy feel."

"Mindless Child of Motherhood" (1969)

Dave Davies' occasional songwriting contributions produced some classics, and some odd time signatures. The B-side rocker "Mindless Child of Motherhood" is one of those math-y excursions. Avory is in constant transition throughout, from holding down straight-four double time in the verses to accenting and rolling through measures of seven and eight in the pre-choruses, then tightening it back up for measures of seven and six in the choruses. It all flows seamlessly. "The words and the melody make it seem quite natural," Avory says. "If you don't have that, it's just a long trail of chords, and it can be difficult to see where you're going with it."

"Strangers" (1970)

"Lola" might be the enduring hit from 1970's "comeback" album, *Lola Versus Powerman and the Moneygoround*, but Dave Davies' "Strangers" is the emotional centerpiece. Avory puts a spacious kick-and-toms pattern to the (mostly) 5/4 tune. The drummer's primal thud feels like an irregular heartbeat beneath Dave's pleading vocal, especially when he moves the 1 from the kick to the rack tom for one turn in each of the song's two choruses. Sparse instrumentation does little to mask a particularly boing-y overtone coming off the rack tom, an imperfection that adds to the track's ramshackle beauty. "The tension of the skin got a little slack from being smacked so much," Avory recalls. "Dave was happy with it and I was happy, so we didn't think about having another go and tuning it up."

"Here Comes Yet Another Day" (1972)

Horns became more commonplace on Kinks recordings and in the group's live shows during the early '70s. And though Avory says they didn't influence his playing on this R&B-inflected deep cut from *Everybody's in Showbiz*—"Ray put the horns on last; they played around us"—it certainly seems their presence inspired a newfound looseness in the rhythm section. Avory drops snares and turns the beat around like he's Bernard Purdie, and in the second verse he's rolling around the kit as if he's Keith Moon. The end result is a great balance of funkiness and recklessness.

"Sleepwalker" (1977)

Avory puts an especially funky groove to "Sleepwalker" (it bears some resemblance to the beat in a Steve Miller hit from the previous year, "Take the Money and Run"), but no one will confuse his playing here with Zigaboo Modeliste, an observation he doesn't disagree with. "It certainly doesn't sound like a black man playing, does it?" Avory says. That self-effacing assessment aside, the feel is fantastic, as Avory grooves with a mash-up of solid backbeat, halting hi-hats, and funky snare fills.

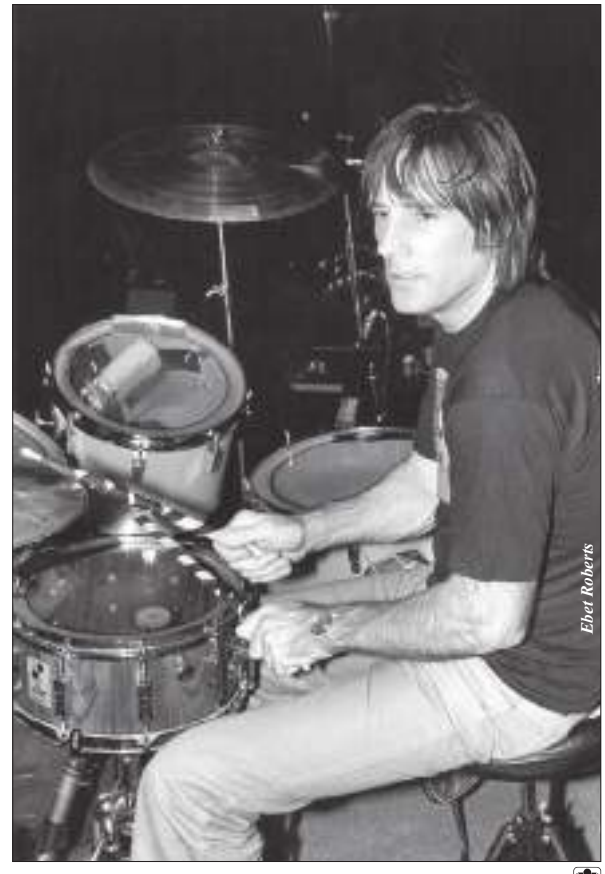
"Destroyer" (1981)

Though Avory didn't play on "All Day and All of the Night" when it was recorded in 1964, seventeen years later he smacked the hell out of his drums on "Destroyer," which is basically a metallic reboot of the Kinks' second top-ten hit. As the band's sound got louder and more riff oriented in the late '70s and early '80s, Avory responded with trashier fills (he

delivers a handful of great snare licks here, especially the one in the middle of the third verse) and a bigger sound that was miles removed from the lighter touch of his early days. "We recorded that at the Power Station in New York," he explains, "in the ambient room, which had a great drum sound. The sound of the room can really affect what you're doing. When you hear that sound slapping around that big room, you want to cut loose. That's what I did."

"Give the People What They Want" (1981)

Avory didn't merely adapt as the Kinks' sound was growing harder and heavier, he killed it, delivering some of the best performances of his twenty-year tenure. He opens "Give the People What They Want" with a pummeling 16th-note snare roll, and shows wrist-burning precision as he accents the "Hey! Hey! Hey!" chant on 2, 3, and 4. Stopping his roll cold in the middle of the sixteenth measure, Avory lays into a hi-hat-throttling beat that wouldn't have sounded out of place on a Ramones record. He goes back to the 16th notes for the last verse, this time on the hi-hats.


Ebet Roberts

Big Rock Called for Big Drumming

Avory circa 1980, the year the Kinks released the blistering double live album *One for the Road*. "When we signed with Arista and started playing larger places," Mick recalls, "Ray went for a bigger sound. The subtle songs didn't come across so well when you've got 20,000 people looking at you. He started to write those songs that were more in your face. And my playing at that time was a result of that."

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Attack of the Juh-Ba

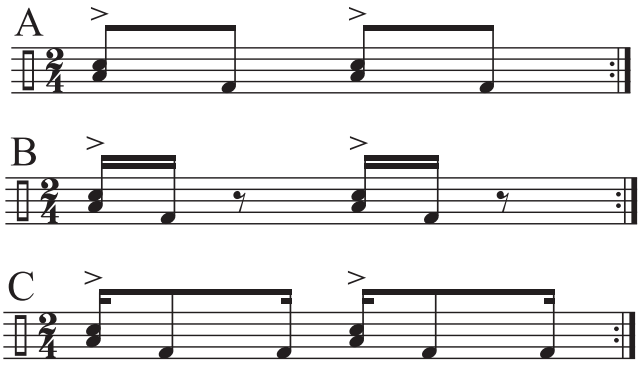
Harness the Power of the Flat Flam Followed by a Kick Drum

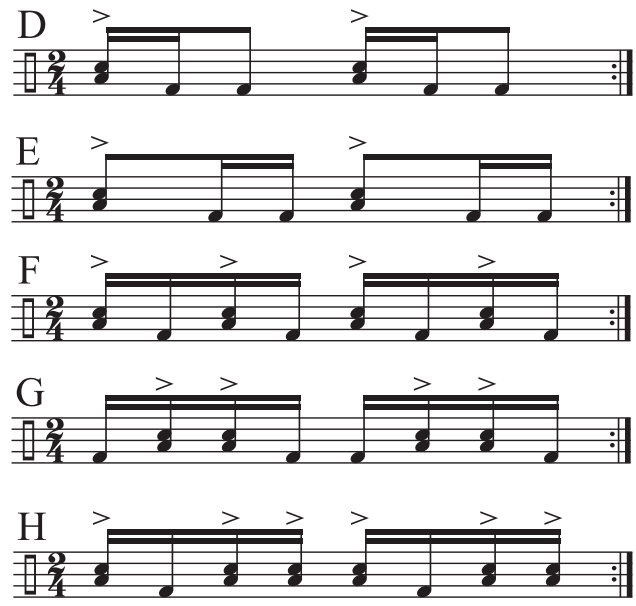
by Rich Redmond

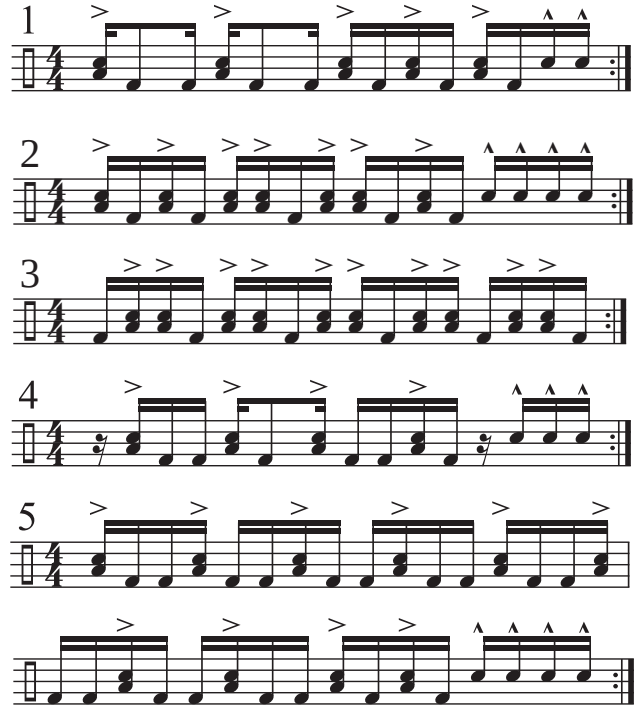
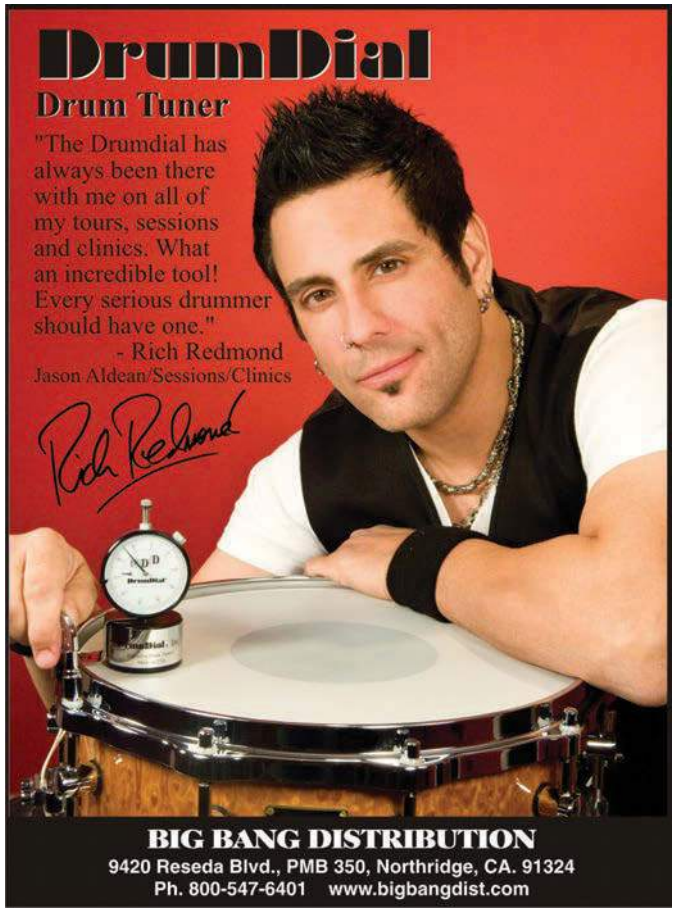
MUSIC KEY

Flat flams are executed by playing two limbs simultaneously. My favorite orchestration of the flat flam is on the snare and floor tom—the combo packs a powerful punch. Follow that with a kick drum hit, and you have what I call the "juh-ba." The juh-ba comes in many forms and has graced many rock, funk, pop, and country recordings. Start listening for it, and you'll hear it everywhere. Why? Because it works!

Practice the building blocks A–H with a metronome.





Now start putting them together in one-measure phrases. You can also get creative by exploring different sounds when you voice the flat flam on splashes, Chinas, rack toms, cowbells, and electronics. Have fun!


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Rich Redmond drums for country star Jason Aldean, is an award-winning clinician, and is an active session drummer in Nashville and Los Angeles. His recent book/DVD, *FUNdamentals of Drumming for Kids* (coauthored with Michael Aubrecht), is available through Modern Drummer Publications.

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Flowing Groupings and Fill-Ins

Exercises for Increased Single-Stroke Control

by Bill Bachman

This month we're going to work on playing flowing groupings of notes with one hand while gradually filling in the spaces between the notes with the opposing hand. The leading hand will play groupings of two, three, four, and six notes, and each grouping will comprise an accent followed by flowing taps.

The key to mastering these exercises with maximum flow and speed is to train your mind to think about the two hands independently. Focusing solely on the lead hand will make it seem as if you can play twice as fast, since you're thinking about only half of the information.

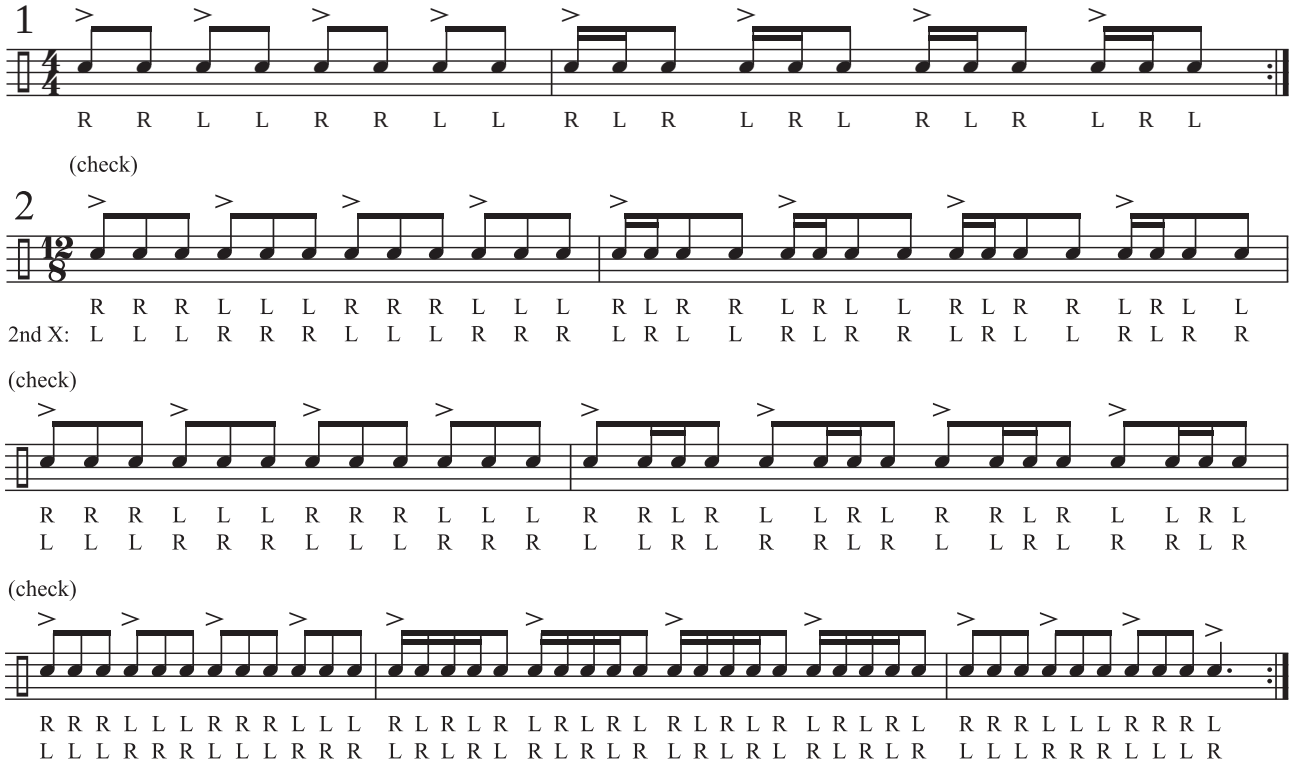
At slow or medium tempos, the four basic strokes (full, down, tap, and up) will work just fine with these patterns. What I want to focus on here, however, is the technique required at faster tempos, which is the "no-chop flop-and-drop."

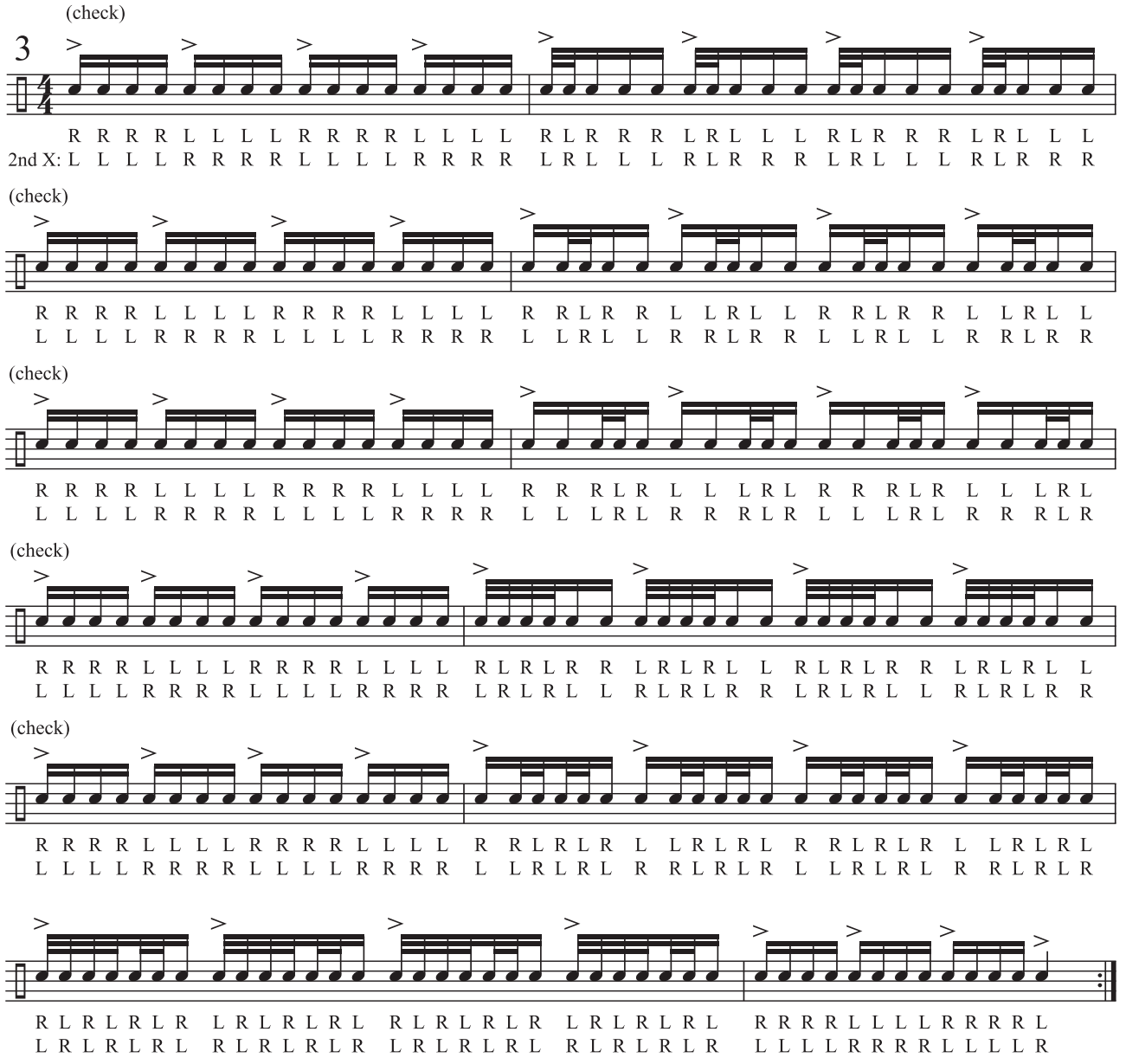
The no-chop flop-and-drop technique is used at faster tempos because there isn't enough time to stop the stick low after the accent to play the low taps. Instead, after executing the high accented note, the stick will simply flop and drop down to play the lower taps without stopping its motion. Avoid using the fingers to add velocity to the taps after the accent, since you want the taps to be quieter than the accent. Though the flop-and-drop taps will not be as low to the drum as when you use basic downstrokes and taps, they will have a lighter sound because of their lesser velocity as they drop down in height. Since the taps flow out of the accent, don't hit the accent too hard, but be sure to start it from a high stick height in order to get the most energy out of it for the taps.

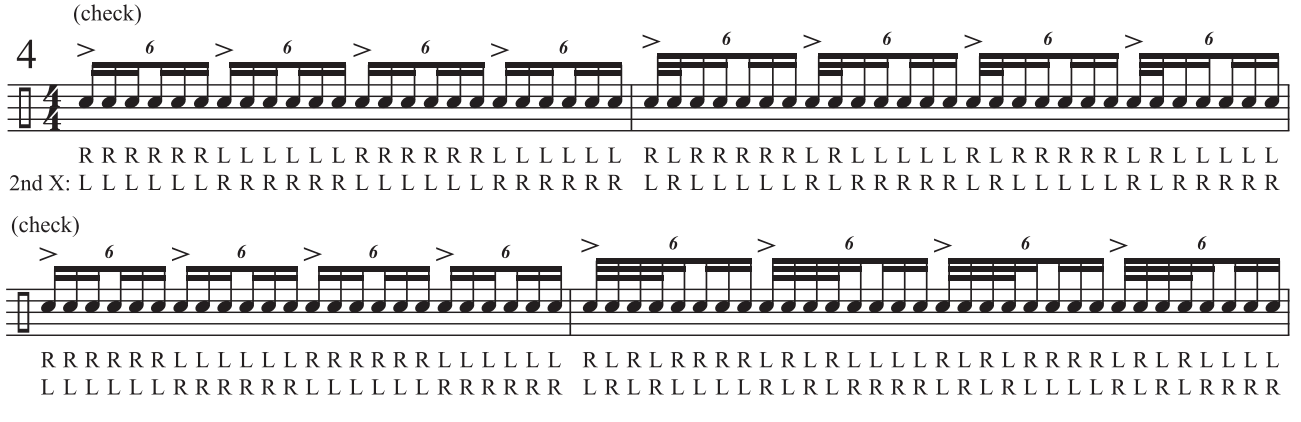
The secondary hand simply fills in the spaces with low taps. These taps should match the lead hand's taps as closely as possible, which means they might need to be played higher, lighter, and with more fingers than you would normally use when playing with regular taps.

It's helpful to play these exercises on different sound sources in order to focus on the flow of the leading hand. The lead hand shouldn't stiffen up when the secondary hand adds the tap fill-ins, or else you'll have an independence problem that will need to be worked out first. Try putting your pad on a couch cushion; play the lead hand on the pad and the fill-ins to either side on the cushion. This will require some side-to-side coordination as the hands alternate, but the goal is to be able to think of only the leading hand. Once you're comfortable, put both hands back on the pad without changing your mental approach. It's also a good idea to sing only the lead hand's part while both hands play.

Practice each pattern over and over with a metronome, or with music, at a stress-free tempo until it becomes second nature. Watch that the lead hand doesn't change as you alternate between the check pattern and the parts that include the fill-ins. With these patterns programmed into your muscle memory, you'll be surprised by how easily they'll resurface in your musical stream of consciousness.

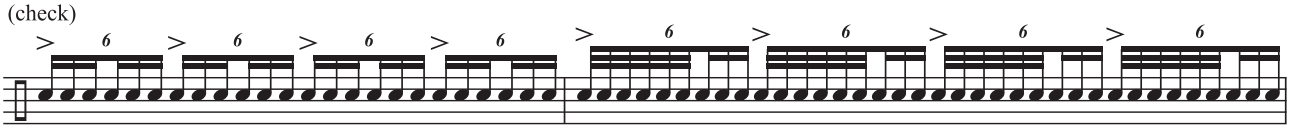

1
R R L L R R L L R L R L R L R L R L R
(check)
2
R R R L L L R R R L L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L
2nd X: L L L R R R L L L R R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R
(check)
R R R L L L R R R L L L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L
L L L R R R L L L R R R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L R
(check)
R R R L L L R R R L L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L L L R R R L L L R R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R



In the following sextuplet exercises, I've opted to add the fill-ins from the front only, so as not to take up too many pages. Feel free to explore the other possibilities on your own.

(check)
4
R R R R R L L L L L R R R R R L L L L L R L R R R R L R L L L L R L R R R R L R L L L L
2nd X: L L L L L R R R R R L L L L L R R R R R L R L L L L R L R R R R L R L L L L R L R R R R L R L L L L R L R R R R
(check)
R R R R R L L L L L R R R R R L L L L L R L R L R R L R L L R L R L R R L R L L
L L L L L R R R R R L L L L L R R R R R L R L R L L R L R R L R L R L L R L R R

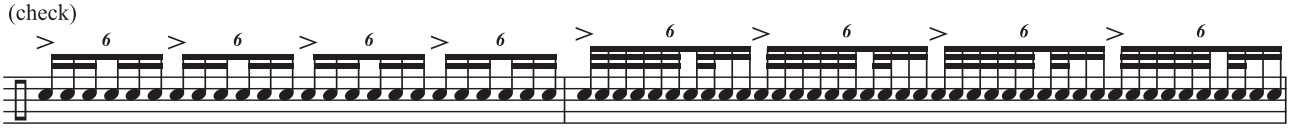
Strictly Technique

(check)



R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L L L
L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R R R

(check)



R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L L L
L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R L R R R L R L R L R L L L R L R L R R R

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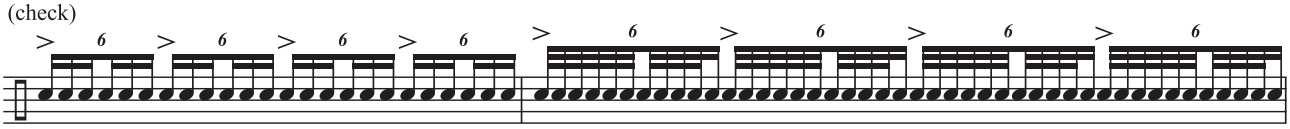
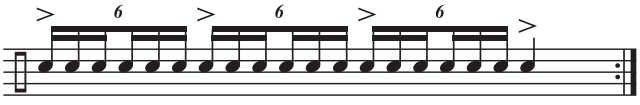


R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L
L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R R R R R R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R



R R R R R R L L L L L R R R R R R L
L L L L L L R R R R R R L L L L L L R

Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician, the author of *Stick Technique* (Modern Drummer Publications), and the founder of drumworkout.com. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons, visit billbachman.net.

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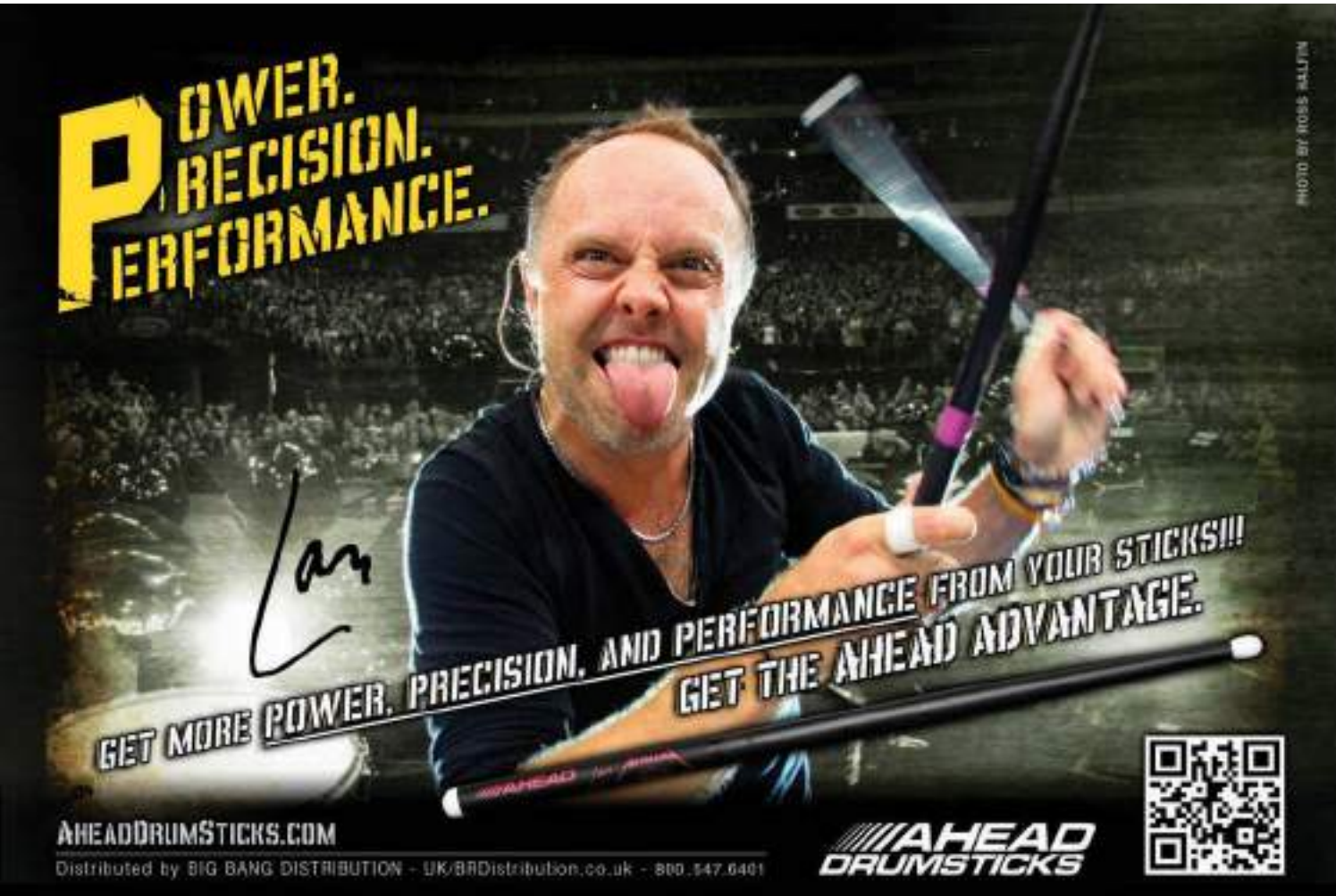

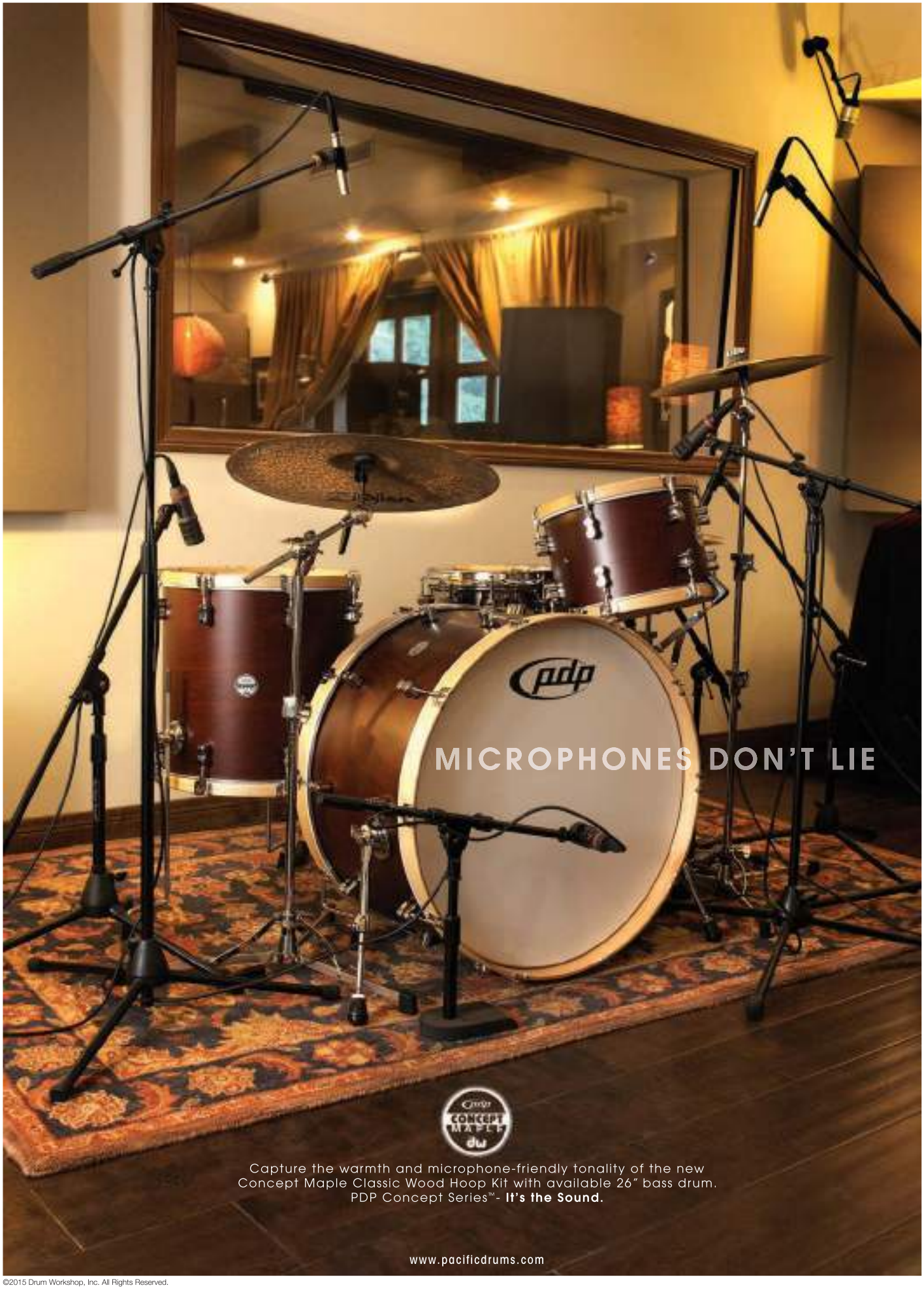
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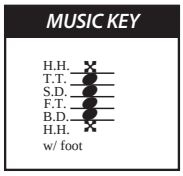
Grooving in Form

Part 1: AABA Beats

by Mike Johnston



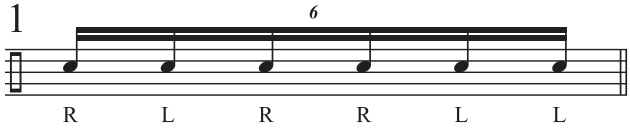
One of the first things you learn when you begin to play in bands is song form, and one of the most popular forms is AABA. Before we get into our lesson, let's first define the traditional AABA structure.

The A part is the main section of the song—often referred to as the verse—and is repeated. The two verses are followed by the B section, aka the bridge, which is musically different from the first section. The bridge gives the song contrast before transitioning back to the final A section. The B section often provides contrast in lyrics, melody, harmony, rhythm, or texture. It's also known as the middle eight, in reference to its placement in the form and number of measures, or it's sometimes called the release.

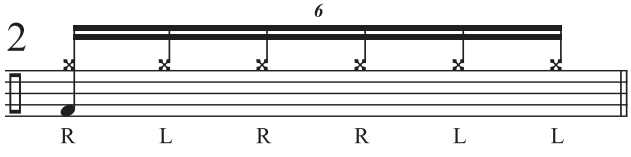
It occurred to me years ago that the AABA form might work just as well on a shorter time scale. What if each beat of a measure was treated as either an A or a B? In that instance you could have a groove where beats 1, 2, and 4 are considered the A section and beat 3 is considered the B section. This type of approach to beat construction proves to be most noticeable in slightly complex grooves, so in this article we're going to work with a sextuplet pattern based on the paradiddle-diddle.

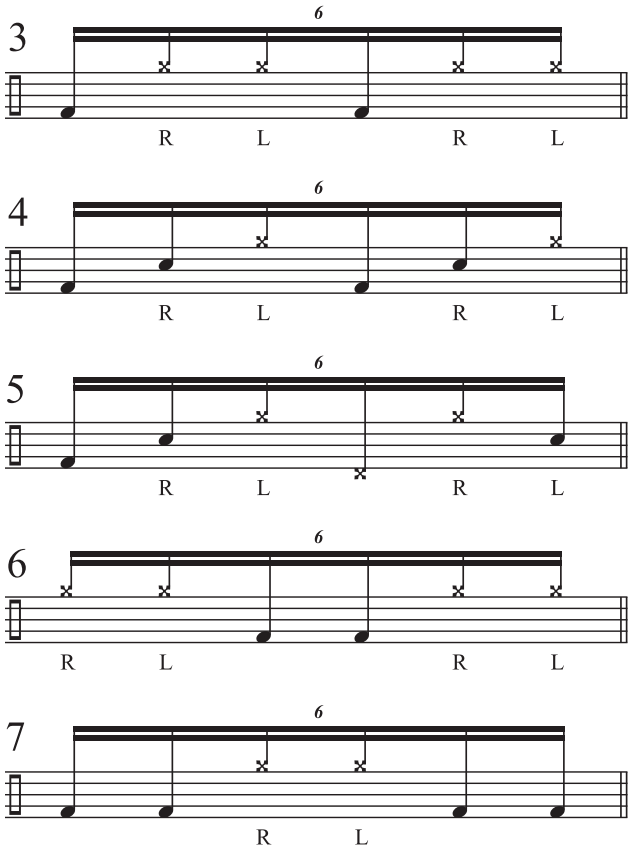
The A section will be a paradiddle-diddle played between the hi-hat and snare. (Make sure to bring your right hand down to the snare on beats 2 and 4 to accentuate the back-beats.) For the B section, we're giving you six options to begin with, but make sure to push yourself to create new B sections once you have these under control.

A Section

The pattern we're using for the A sections is composed of a paradiddle-diddle sticking orchestrated between the hi-hat and the snare. You'll play this on beats 1, 2, and 4. Here's the basic sticking.

B Section

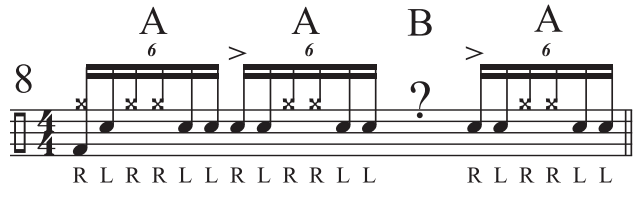
The B section is where the experimentation happens. This is supposed to be a departure from the A section, so creativity is key. Create your own B-section parts after you've learned the following six options.



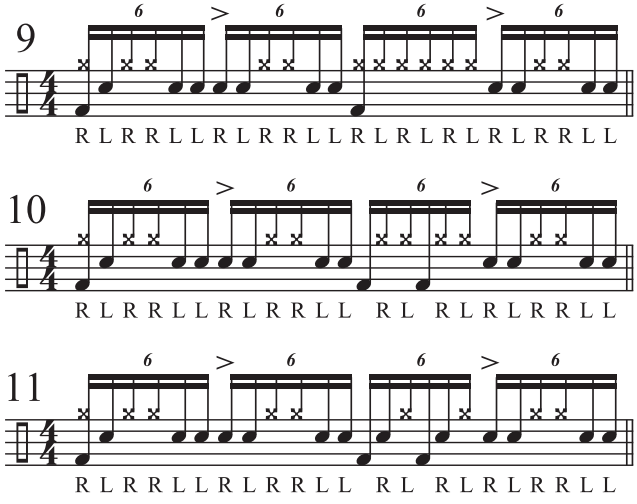


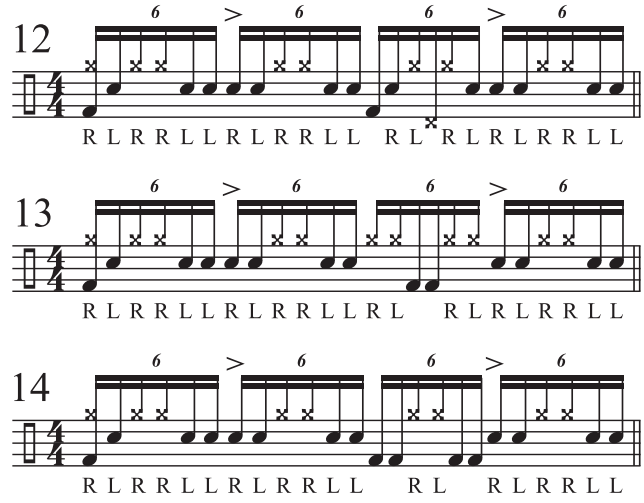
All Together Now

The following example shows how to construct beats using the AABA form. The paradiddle-diddle in the A section is a constant, and the B section is the variable. Each time you try a different B-section option, ask yourself how that group of notes affects the groove differently from the last group. Don't just play the exercises as notes on a page. Make them groove, and spend time internalizing the effect that each grouping has on the texture and overall vibe.



Here's what the AABA groove looks like with each of the six B-section options we provided. Work through them, and be sure to come up with your own variations.





Mike Johnston runs the educational website mikeslessons.com, where he offers prerecorded videos as well as real-time online lessons. He also hosts weeklong drum camps at the mikeslessons.com facility each year.

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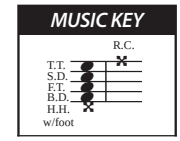
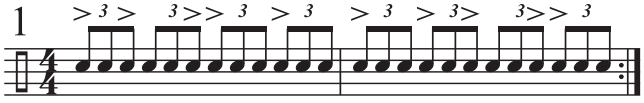
Elvin Jones–Style Triplet Fills

Part 3: More Two-Bar Patterns

by John Xepoleas

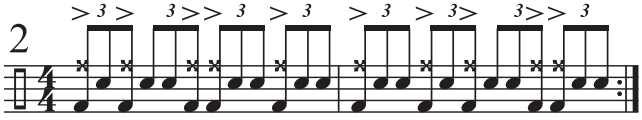


Welcome to the third and final lesson in our series on creating Elvin Jones–style triplet fills. This time we're creating high-energy two-bar fills. Let's begin with the sticking pattern we've been using throughout the lesson. Practice this until you're totally comfortable with it and it becomes part of your muscle memory.

1

R L R L L R R L L R L L R L L R R L L R L L R R L L

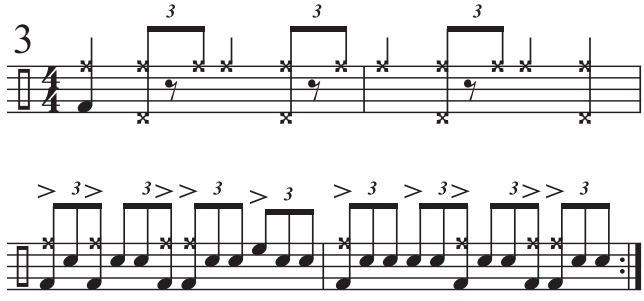
Now play the right-hand part using the ride cymbal and bass drum. Make the ride and bass drum the lead parts in the pattern by accenting them and playing them with an aggressive feel. The left-hand notes on the snare should be played softly.

2



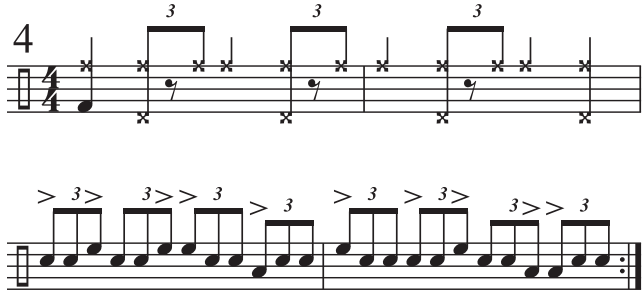
This version is the same as Example 2, except that the rack tom is played on beat 4 of the first measure and the snare is played on beat 2 of the second measure.

3



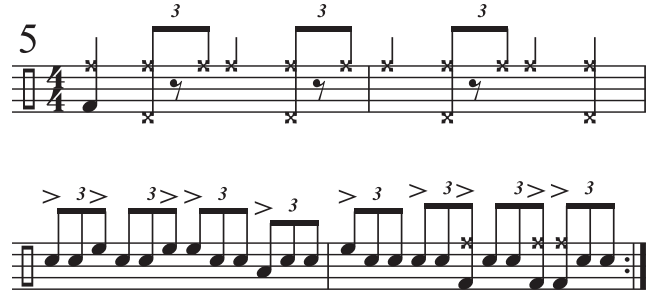
Now we'll break away from the cymbals and focus on phrasing the accents on the toms.

4



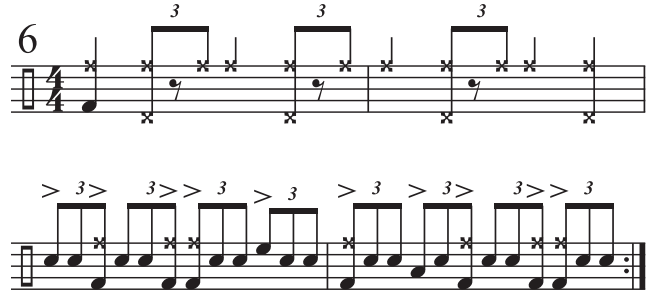
In the next example we've created the fill by combining the first bar from Example 4 with a variation of the second bar from Example 3.

5



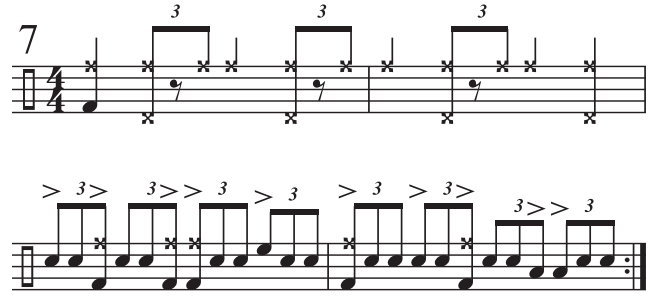
Here's a variation of Example 3.

6



This version is similar to Example 6 but has some subtle changes in the second bar.

7



Well, that wraps this miniseries on developing high-energy Elvin Jones–type triplet fills. I sure hope you enjoyed it!

John Xepoleas has written two drum books, *Style Studies for the Creative Drummer* and *Essential Drum Lessons With the Greats*. He is also an active online educator. For more info, visit johnxdrums.com.

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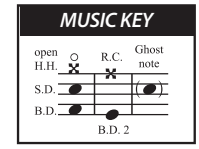
Progressive Drumming Essentials

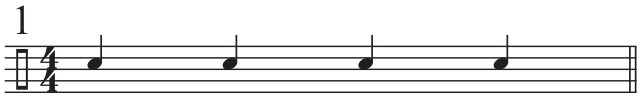
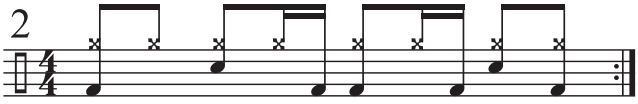
Part 1: Understanding Odd Time Signatures

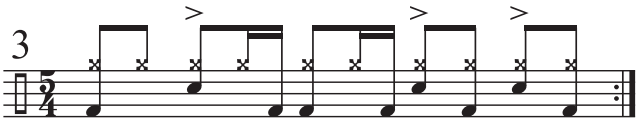
by Aaron Edgar



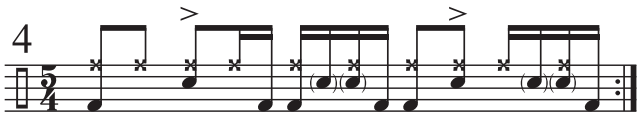
Before we start playing sick proggy grooves in 17/16, let's start at the beginning and define time signatures. Time signatures tell us the length of a bar, or measure. This is done with a pair of numbers. The bottom number refers to a subdivision (4 = quarter notes, 8 = 8th notes, and 16 = 16th notes), and the top number tells us how many of those notes are included in one measure.

Quarter-Note Meters

The most common time signature is 4/4, where we have four quarter notes per bar. You aren't limited to playing only quarter notes, though. You can use any subdivision you want, provided that the sum of those subdivisions equals the length of four quarter notes.

Let's give some quarter-note meters a try. First up is 4/4.

Now let's get away from common time (4/4) by changing the top number from 4 to 5. This means we'll have five quarter notes per measure. We'll modify the basic 4/4 groove in Example 2 by simply repeating the last quarter note. This might feel a little strange at first. Your best bet to make it feel natural is to go slowly and count out loud. I also suggest bobbing your head on the beat, because sometimes you can feel a pattern more easily when you're moving your body along with it.



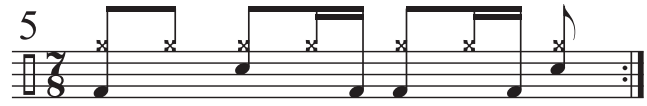
Let's make this feel a little more interesting. Instead of just repeating beat 4 on beat 5, we'll try a new pattern with snare accents on beat 2 and the "&" of 4.



I encourage you to experiment further with other quarter-note meters. Some fun listening homework would be to check out Peter Gabriel's "Solsbury Hill" followed by Primus's "Year of the Parrot." Both songs are in 7/4, but they feel completely different. "Year of the Parrot" is angular and syncopated, while "Solsbury Hill" is so natural feeling that, with just a casual listen, you might not even notice that it's in an odd time signature.

8th-Note Meters

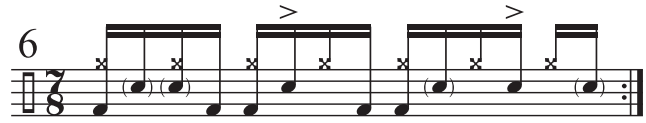
Eighth-note meters are a little bit trickier to pull off. The first time signature we're going to try is 7/8, which is essentially a bar of 4/4 minus one 8th note. The easiest way to get started with this is to drop an 8th note from the last beat of a 4/4 groove that you already know how to play. Let's do that with Example 2.



If you haven't played in 7/8 before, it's probably going to feel a bit awkward. The first step in fixing that is to count out loud and accent beat 1. So count the 16th notes ("1-e-&-a, 2-e-&-a, 3-e-&-a, 4-e"), and replace the hi-hat on beat 1 with a crash. Try bobbing your head to the beat as well.

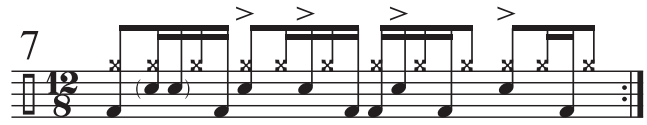
Once you have a handle on that, set a metronome to 8th notes and go back and forth between playing four bars of Example 2 and four bars of Example 5. Repeat that pattern until the odd-time bar feels just as natural as the 4/4 bar. All it takes is relating the challenging part (the 7/8 measure) to something you're already comfortable with (the 4/4 measure).

Now let's see how it feels when we spice up the 7/8 groove a little. Try alternating between the following syncopated 7/8 groove and a syncopated 4/4 beat of your choosing.



12/8 Time

This time signature is generally felt as four groupings of three 8th notes, which is the same as playing triplets in 4/4.



You can use that same type of feel in odd time signatures. Let's try 11/8. Example 8 is especially challenging, because we don't play constant 8th notes with the hi-hats. This broken pattern helps the groove feel unique and syncopated. Spending the time to make patterns like this feel natural will not only help you play challenging grooves, but it'll also help solidify your internal pulse so you can make more standard beats feel even better.

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Photo of Anthony Jones, Pink Martini

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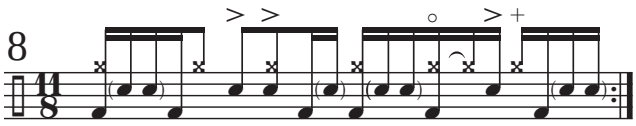
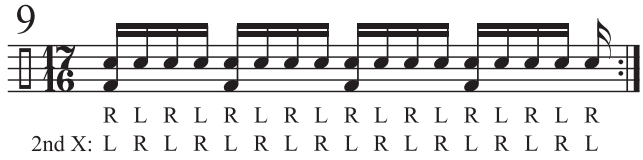
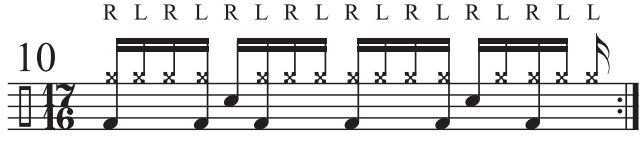
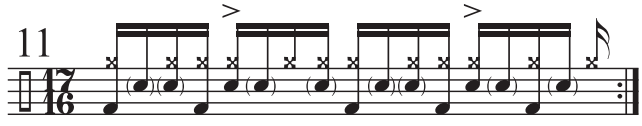
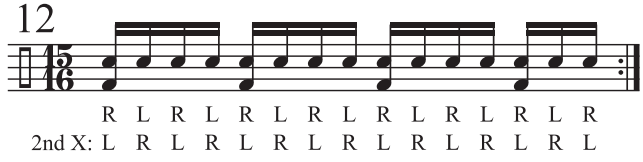
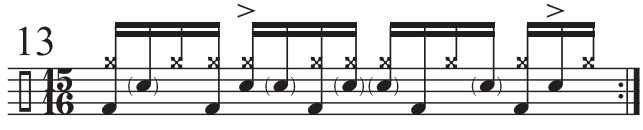
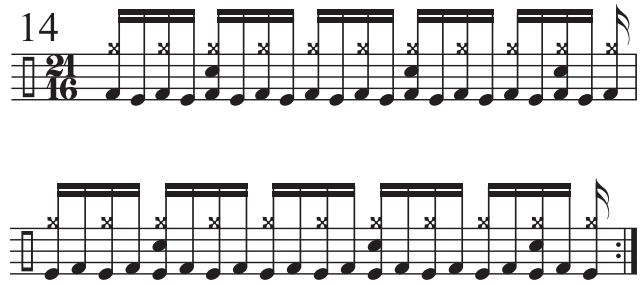

16th-Note Meters

Here's where the lesson starts to get serious. You can consider 16th-note meters as feeling either one 16th note longer than a quarter-note meter or one 16th note shorter. For example, 17/16 is essentially a bar of 4/4 plus one 16th note, and 15/16 is the opposite; it's one 16th less than a bar of 4/4.

The first thing to do is to play constant 16ths on the snare or practice pad and count them aloud. (For the final note, say "Five.") Use singles, and notice that the sticking will reverse on the repeats. Once that's comfortable, add your metronome to the mix to tighten and refine the rhythm. As in the previous examples, go back and forth between the odd-time example and a similar pattern in 4/4.

Let's try the same type of idea with 15/16. Take special notice of the bass drum pattern in Example 13.

For double bass players, Example 14 is a 21/16 groove to get you started.



In all of these examples, it's imperative that you feel beat 1 as beat 1 and not as an offbeat. Work through the patterns slowly, focus on counting out loud, and bob your head on at least beat 1 of every bar.

Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for weekly live lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.

For a video demo of these examples, visit moderndrummer.com.

Don't Make It Harder Than It Has to Be

Leave Your Attitude at the Door

by Russ Miller

Strife happens in life. It's almost a guarantee. It happens in every business, like when somebody gets a new position in a company and brings his or her own agenda. And conflicts can happen when you have on horse blinders in a specific situation, or when you try to force ideas into *every* situation. Usually this is based on ego or personal politics, and problems arise when people don't like listening to the opinions of others. It can be a common source of tension in team efforts, like a band, when one member's ego nudges that person to try to take over the direction of the entire unit. In this column, I'm going to address two ways that we often attempt to force our ideas into a playing situation.

> "Politics: A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles."
>
> —Ambrose Bierce

My Way or the Highway!

I recently played in the house band for a show featuring several Motown artists. The band was in the challenging but fun position of playing each of the artists' material. Almost everyone on stage was hired by one of the top contractors in Los Angeles. Most of the band members were leaders, musical directors, and contractors in their own right, so there was a lot of experience on stage. Three of the players were brought in by the arranger. These guys have played the featured artists' material before, so they should've been able to give some insight to the rest of us.

Unfortunately, they chose to do the opposite. They were rude and unhelpful, and basically created a negative vibe for the gig. At first I thought they were just used to hearing the music a certain way, so maybe they were a little thrown by how we were playing it. But the odd part was that they were the keyboard player, the bass player, and the trombonist…not the singer, musical director, or bandleader.

Along the lines of what I wrote about in the May 2015 issue, these three musicians were operating outside their roles. They were sidemen on this date, so they really should have just played their parts as best they could and been quiet about everything else. Instead, all three of them would stop the band and comment, roll their eyes at other players, and not really listen to the group. This created an uncomfortable working environment for everyone there—including the artists.

At one point the keyboardist stopped the band in a very dramatic way and said, "I can't play this song with this feel that Russ is playing." The musical director and I each asked, "What's the issue with it?" "I want this one to swing," the keyboardist said. Now, first of all, I'm reading the chart. It has the groove written out in the first bar, with straight 16th notes on the hi-hat, 2 and 4 on the snare, and a funky bass drum pattern with several 16th-note syncopations. The arrangement was written with a funk/disco feel, which is basically the opposite of a "swinging" triplet-based groove. I had to make a choice. Do I tell him where it's at, or do I not cause an incident on the stage—in front of the band and artists—and just say "Absolutely. Let's swing it then!" I chose to respond with the latter.

A lot of things were questionable in this scenario. First, the keyboardist was out of line stopping the band when he wasn't the leader. He should have asked the musical director about the feel after we played through the song. Or he could've approached me after the rehearsal or just trusted that we were aware of what was notated on the chart and left it at that. He caused a scene and also made the MD feel uncomfortable, as if his arrangement were wrong. The most damaging outcome was that the contractor and leader looked at him like, *What's this guy's problem?*

So what's the lesson here? We often get put into situations in life where we have a choice of whether to escalate things with our reaction or stay cool. After we played the piece with a more triplet-based groove, I said to the keyboardist, quietly, "Is that cool? Sorry for the confusion, but the chart has straight 16ths on it." He said nothing back. I ended up finding out later in the weekend that the bassist, keyboardist, and trombonist work together a lot, and the keyboardist is usually the leader of the gigs. So he was frustrated that he wasn't the leader on this one.

The strife in this particular situation was both personal and musical. Those three guys wanted things to go their way, with their friends being part of it. The keyboardist wanted to control how the songs sounded, even if the MD and the artists had intentionally changed things a bit. It wouldn't have mattered if Tony Williams were the drummer on the gig. They wanted their usual drummer, and nobody else could do right by them in this case.

By coming into the gig with bad attitudes and personal agendas, they probably lost some future work. Several of the other players made comments like, "They won't be back." As I wrote about in the April 2015 article on building versus burning bridges, if you have a bad attitude too many times, the phone may stop ringing.

Forcing Yourself

Our primary artistic goal should be to let the nature of the music tell you what to play organically. Listen and react! This is why we train so much on the instrument, so we can paint a fresh picture each time we sit down to play. Of course we have to respect the parts, but there should always be a different delivery of the musical script. You should never play with a "This is where it's at" attitude, where you fail to listen and react to the other players and are simply regurgitating your parts and hoping it works.

This is an issue with too many machines being used in the creation of music. Machines deliver their part ruthlessly and unforgivingly. But just assembling a bunch of parts won't make music. It's the communication and reaction of the musicians *playing*

those notes that really matters. Machines have an agenda. They say, "I'm playing my part, so I don't care what you do." But there has to be cohesion between the players in an ensemble to allow great musical moments to happen. Machines can't do that.

I've seen many people play like machines, often forcing in the wrong fills, playing over the lyrics, and playing dynamically out of balance. That's what happens when you have a musical agenda. You're essentially saying, "Here's what I want to do, so deal with it." In those moments it's not music; it's just drumming. That type of approach is also a display of your personal agenda. Allow everybody the opportunity to deliver at his or her highest level of artistry. To do that requires listening, reacting, adapting, and being a servant to the ensemble and the music. And you can do all of that while also allowing an opportunity for magic to happen.

In closing, the best way to enter a situation is with an attitude of, "Let's make this the best it can be for everybody," both personally and musically. Everybody knows that there's no "I" in the word *team*, but there's no "I" in the word *band* either!

Russ Miller has played on recordings with combined sales of more than 26 million copies. His versatility has led him to work with a wide range of artists, including Ray Charles, Tina Turner, Nelly Furtado, and Andrea Bocelli. For more info, visit russmiller.com.

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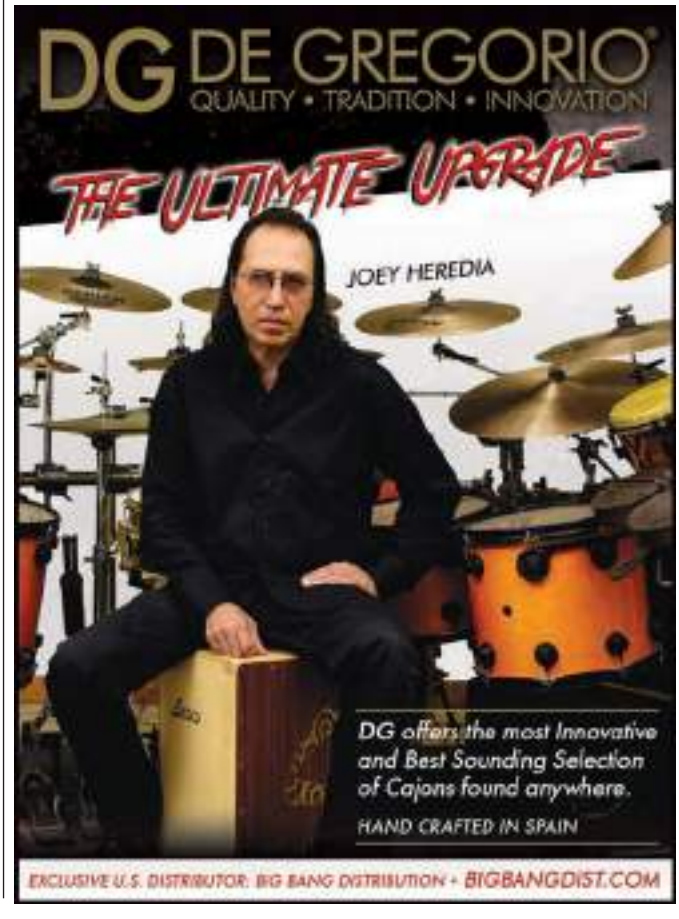
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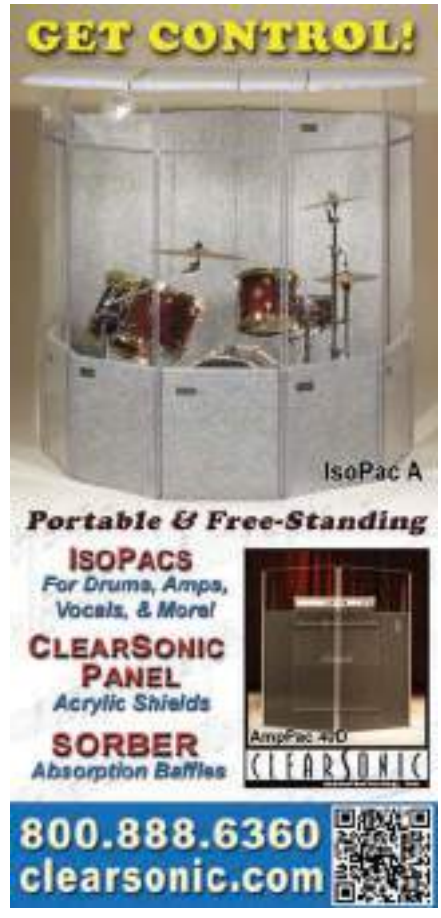

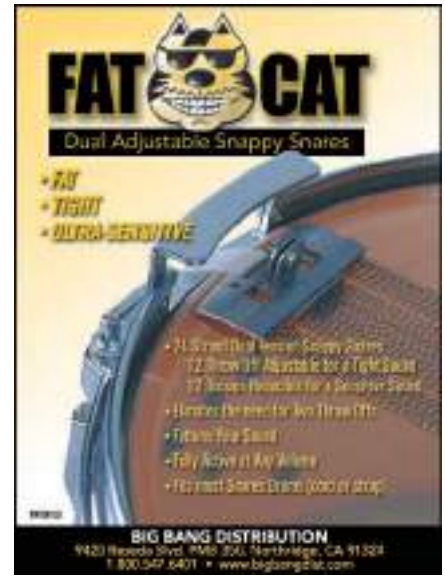

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CRITIQUE

Wolff & Clark Expedition *Expedition 2*

Mike Clark has always been a jazzer at heart, and he proves it again here. But fans of his magical way around a fusion groove won't be disappointed.

Mike Clark is best known for laying down some serious funk-fusion with Herbie Hancock in the '70s, but that doesn't mean he didn't come up swinging like everyone else in the '60s. And swing he does on this high-energy romp through bop standards and hip originals, his second release with pianist Michael Wolff. Things get off to a hot start, with the drummer's insistent ride on "Clark Bar" full of tough New York swagger. "Gingerbread Boy" is treated with some of that famous Clark linear funk, complete with fierce hat and snare doubles and bass drum accents. Clark plays with his fingers and brushes on the more subtle tunes, but the overall vibe here is propulsive jazz, executed with skill by a name player out to prove that he can wear any number of capes quite effectively. (Random Act) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Dean Magraw & Eric Kamau Gravatt *Fire on the Nile*

In the right hands, this album proves, a guitar/drums lineup can be as expressive as an orchestra.

A thorough listening to *Fire on the Nile* reaps rewards, and will give those unfamiliar with **Eric Gravatt** (McCoy Tyner, Weather Report, Bill Frisell) a hint at his power. This is an adventurous recording, but Gravatt and guitarist Dean Magraw have no fear. Playing it heavy and loose on "Baby Wayne," Gravatt shows he's more interested in having a rocking good time than keeping strict time. No bassist? No problem. Gravatt's mad Latin-rock groove on "Innocence" really works. And mercy, there's nothing hurried about his bluesy beat on "Sleeping Diva." Elsewhere he provides a nice rootsy pattern on the freewheeling "Coast Highway," while "Sharrock" is wide open, a beautiful barrage of tom and snare rolls, plus kick drum and crash punctuations. The title track is similarly free—the duo is creating, interpreting powerful music on the spot. (Red House) **Robin Tolleson**

Karl Latham/Ryan Carniaux/ Mark Egan *Constellations*

Space, atmosphere, and chops get equal measure on this Björk tribute.

Owing as much to the '70s electric Miles Davis period as to Icelandic singer Björk, **Karl Latham** and company deliver here on the reverb-drenched fusion vibe and open-ended vamps while still focusing on giving the compositions their due. With a band including bass, trumpet, and guest keyboards, Latham can take the music anywhere, throwing in a stuttering 7/8 ride pattern on "Desired Constellation" and bringing a slow, insistent swing to "I See Who You Are." He's also not afraid to lay out for stretches. By abstracting Björk's melodies just enough and adding a few of their own compositions, the players focus the attention on their interpretive decisions, adding mystery and occasional technical fortitude along the way. Latham's kit sounds great as well. It will be interesting to see how this stuff works on stage. (Double Moon) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

New Vocabulary *New Vocabulary*

Drummer Amir Ziv and trumpet player Jordan McLean meet jazz icon Ornette Coleman head on, and the results produce subtle fireworks.

Now in his mid-eighties, alto sax great Ornette Coleman isn't appearing on as many records as he once did, but this collaboration with trumpeter Jordan McLean (Antibalas) and drummer **Amir Ziv** reveals that he hasn't lost any of his searching phrasing or command. Ziv and McLean, along with guest pianist Adam Holzman, are also bandmates in the electroacoustic group Droid, and the brief, atmospheric vignettes here occasionally touch on off-kilter, "Where's the 1?" beats, with Ziv riding some sort of gong ("Value and Knowledge"), and playing busier, funky patterns heavy on the hats and brimming with snare ghosting ("The Idea Has No Destiny"). Coleman floats on top of it all, and no tracks overstay their welcome, even when Ziv is at his most esoteric and free. A slightly better recording would perhaps have drawn out a bit more detail in the instruments, but the album's sonic character was likely intended. (System Dialing) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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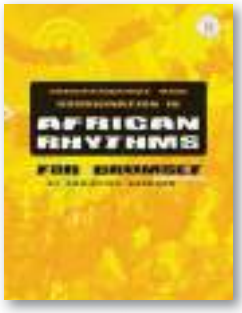

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Independence and Coordination in African Rhythms for Drumset: Cameroon by Christian Bourdon

In this method book/CD package, Christian Bourdon brings rhythms from Cameroon to life on the drumkit—his notations and playing examples of bikutsi, mbala, mangambeu, ekang, ashiko, makossa, tchamassi, and makassi are superbly tasty and adventurous. Bourdon bases many exercises on the African 4/12 philosophy, while also focusing on some of the 3/4, 6/8, and 12/8 variations of the bikutsi rhythm—a mix of binary and ternary forms. Flam taps are presented in 12/8 and in 4/4, and Bourdon offers some very inventive displacements. Ashiko rhythms are upbeat and frequently offbeat. Bourdon begins with

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—**Rich Redmond**,
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exercises emphasizing independence of the feet and then develops numerous ear-catching beats. A challenging, mind-opening book—honestly, I'm still working on the beginning feet exercises. Note: An additional hi-hat and a double bass drum pedal are recommended for executing these stimulating rhythms. ($36, Advance/Kendor) **Robin Tolleson**

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John Wackerman
Drum Duets Vol. II

The ambitious middle Wackerman sibling (Chad older, Brooks younger) builds on his *Drum Duets Vol. I* with more than 200 minutes of new, explosive double drumming with another army of dignitaries. Among the highlights of this two-DVD set: Wackerman's fertile imagination constructs an all-cymbal-kit duet with **Jon Theodore**, a "junk rock" jam with beat-bucket master **Justin Spencer**, and a rousing rudimental snare/floor tom duet with drum-line expert **Scott Johnson**. Using DW founder Don Lombardi's Drum Channel facility as his playground, Wackerman exchanges heavy, often cerebral conversation with an eclectic spectrum of superstars, including **Terry Bozzio**, **Dennis Chambers**, **Marco Minnemann**, **Thomas Lang**, **Gene Hoglan**, **Taylor Hawkins**, and **Travis Barker**. With overdubbed loops and electronics, the edited musical backdrop helps fill out the sometimes overwhelming abundance of exchanges of composed and improvised drumming. Given the challenging compositions and high levels of proficiency from his celebrity counterparts, Wackerman holds his own, illustrating that drum duets can be fun, creative, and adventurous, no matter the content or context. ($19.95, drumchannel.com) **Mike Haid**

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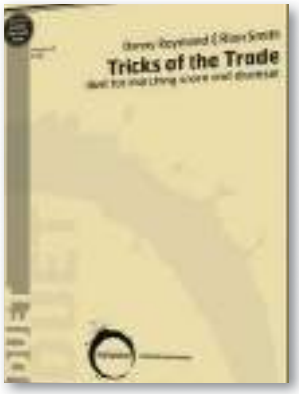
Tricks of the Trade: Duet for Marching Snare and Drumset
by Danny Raymond and Rion Smith



This advanced-level, five-and-a-half-minute duet combines drumset and rudimental snare in an upbeat piece that features several funk and rock styles. The notation is exceptionally clear, and both performers have sections to solo, accompany, and trade fours. Use your marching chops to play Danny Raymond's solo—he's a two-time DCA snare champion and longtime Walt Disney World musician—or create your own. Rion Smith, a touring drummer for Blue Man Group, transcribed his kit solo but encourages you to improvise. Complete with dynamics and visuals, this score/CD-ROM package is as much fun to watch as it is to play. Check out the duo's video at tapspace.com. ($30, Tapspace) **Andrea Byrd**

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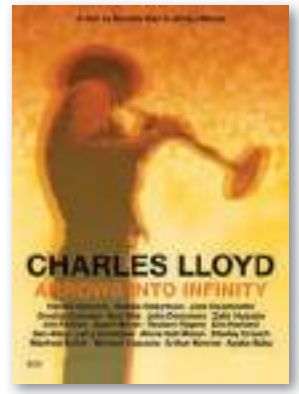
Charles Lloyd: Arrows Into Infinity
directed by Dorothy Darr and Jeffery Morse



This DVD offers a fascinating look at saxophonist Charles Lloyd's career, including meaningful relationships with several marvelously musical drummers. Footage shows Lloyd jamming in the California woods with **Jack DeJohnette**, as well as their legendary performance at the 1966 Monterey Jazz Festival—DeJohnette's power, sensitivity, and creativity are impressive in the grainy footage. **Jim Keltner** and **John Densmore** testify to Lloyd's musical inclusiveness; we hear how **Zakir Hussain** became a tremendous influence on Lloyd, and vice versa; and a respectful **Eric Harland** gives Lloyd and Hussain credit for expanding his playing. The film also shares some touching clips of Lloyd sharing good times with **Billy Higgins** near the end of the drummer's life. Discussing his move out of the limelight years ago, Lloyd explains that one cannot shoot arrows into infinity without pulling the bow back. ($19.99, ECM) **Robin Tolleson**

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Slaytanic Drum Techniques: In the Style of Slayer's and Dave Lombardo's South of Heaven
by Greg Sundel

Those who might think it's a bit strange for a drummer who's played with Lauryn Hill to write a book about Dave Lombardo's fiery rage on Slayer's 1988 classic, *South of Heaven*, should rest easy, because it's all here and then some. The kick-ass kit work Lombardo brought to songs like "Silent Scream" and "Cleanse the Soul" was at the forefront of advanced metal double bass drumming, and author Greg Sundel transcribes every tom roll and tempo change on the album so that you can retreat to the shed and follow along—if you can. Sundel explains Lombardo's influences and also makes the case for the drummer having created the first blast beat, on "Live Undead." He even digs deep into specific fills outside their context so that readers can analyze the nuances and bring that understanding to the song. Metal drumming might have moved forward since then, but maybe what's represented in these pages has never actually been *bettered*. ($21.95, gregsundel.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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In Memoriam

Keith Copeland

Chuck Stewart

A versatile drummer best known for his work with jazz greats and for his revered teaching career, Keith Copeland died on February 14 at age sixty-eight, following a brief illness. He toured the world as a musician and an educator and left a recorded legacy surpassing a hundred albums.

"He had a great jazz feel and was always positive and enthusiastic about the music," guitarist Dave Stryker says. "Keith was not only a great drummer but a beautiful person."

Copeland, who was born on April 18, 1946, was immersed in jazz growing up in Queens, New York, where he listened to basement rehearsals led by his father, the noted trumpeter Ray Copeland. Ray offered to buy his ten-year-old a drumkit piece by piece every six months if he proved serious with his studies. By the time Keith reached age thirteen, the kit was complete—a set of Ludwigs that the drummer kept into his later years. Schoolmate Billy Cobham frequently stopped by for drum jams. By fifteen, Copeland was gigging locally, and at seventeen he landed a steady engagement with an organ trio in Greenwich Village, where the underage drummer could roam from club to club checking out his jazz heroes.

Joining the U.S. Air Force in 1963, Copeland specialized in telecommunications and cryptology while stationed in Greenland and Germany. He aspired to drum with the 17th Air Force Band. But the bandleader was bluntly informed that the swinging soldier—a specialist with top-secret clearance—was far too valuable to lend to his group.

Following three years of service, Copeland returned to New York and studied with Walter Perkins. He subsequently enrolled in Boston's Berklee College of Music, where his arrival created a buzz in jazz circles. While touring with a unit named the Nine Lords, Copeland snagged an audition with Stevie Wonder, resulting in seven months of touring (1971-72), including a stretch sharing bills with the Rolling Stones.

Copeland also worked steadily in Boston with the Maggie Scott Trio, occasionally backing stars such as Billy Eckstine, Cab Calloway, and Eartha Kitt. One Bostonian who took special notice of Copeland's talents was the legendary drummer/educator Alan Dawson, who frequently recommended the young musician for high-profile gigs including a no-rehearsal engagement with Bill Evans at the Jazz Workshop. When relinquishing his teaching position at Berklee in 1975, Dawson again recommended Copeland. Flattered, Copeland accepted the offer, and went on to teach at the college for three years, but he also requested to simultaneously study with Dawson.

Returning to New York, Copeland worked with Sam Jones' quintet, followed by a stint with Johnny Griffin, an eighteen-month stretch with the Heath Brothers, a five-year run with Billy Taylor, and a long partnership with Hank Jones.

Boasting a massive performance résumé and discography, Copeland worked with Milt Jackson, Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron, John Dankworth, Stan Getz, Paul Bley, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Phil Woods, Stéphane Grappelli, Cleo Laine, Jaki Byard, Frank Foster, Joanne Brackeen, Syreeta Wright, Stanley Cowell, Sir Roland Hanna, Tom Harrell, Slide Hampton, and many others. His discography includes three Grammy nominees: Johnny Hartman's *Once in Every Life* (1980), George Russell's *The African Game* (1983), and Charles Brown's *All My Life* (1990). His own recordings as a leader are *On Target* (1993), *The Irish Connection* (1996), *Round Trip* (1997),

Postcard From Vancouver (1998), and *Live in Limerick* (2000).

Copeland's extensive career as an educator included positions at Rutgers University, Queens College, Long Island University, and the New School. He also presided over international clinics and college workshops. His book, *Creative Coordination for the Performing Drummer*, was published in 1986. In 1992 Copeland moved to Germany, where he held professorships at the Cologne University of Music and the University of Music, Mannheim-Heidelberg. He continued touring with top artists in the U.S. and Europe, including Sonny Fortune, Ernie Watts, Howard Alden, Chris Connor, Ray Mantilla, Benny Golson, Houston Person, Karl-Heinz Steffens, Joshua Breakstone, Philip Catherine, John Tchicai, and David Hazeltine, as well as leading his own trio.

In 2005, Copeland suffered a stroke. Doctors were doubtful about his drumming future. But at a physical rehab hospital, Copeland practiced on a kit jammed into a nearby room. He recovered and returned to teaching and performing—albeit with less of a whirlwind schedule—until his recent retirement.

Terri Lyne Carrington tells *MD*, "Keith was my most important teacher. He had the right knowledge, tools, and demeanor to work with young people and transform the raw talent into something more polished, helping to shape the careers of many drummers. The drum world has lost an important contributor, and all of us that he touched will miss him dearly." **Jeff Potter**

Ronnie Bedford

Ronnie Bedford, a drummer who played with swing, musicality, and verve, died this past December 20 at age eighty-three. In a long and prolific career, he toured the world and recorded with jazz icons.

Masato Onoda

Bedford was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, on June 2, 1931. He began drumming professionally at sixteen and got his big break hitting the road with Louis Prima and Keely Smith in 1950. By 1954, he was based in New York, where his freelance career rocketed. He performed and/or recorded with Eddie Condon, Buddy DeFranco, Bill Watrous, Harold Ashby, Arnett Cobb, Hank Jones, Don Friedman, Johnny Richards, Tal Farlow, Lee Konitz, George Masso, Chuck Wayne, Rod Levitt, Bobby Hackett, and Pee Wee Russell, among many others.

Bedford's two years of world touring with Benny Goodman in the mid-'70s included a massive Central Park concert and a packed appearance at Royal Albert Hall. The drummer was also especially proud of his long association with sax great Benny Carter, which began in 1977. In addition to his jazz pursuits, Bedford covered wide styles in the studio for TV and radio jingles and performed with onstage ensembles in the Broadway musicals *No Strings* and *A Thurber Carnival*.

Relocating to Wyoming in 1986, Bedford served as percussion instructor at Northwest College, where he taught for twenty-five years. He performed locally, cofounding the annual Yellowstone Jazz Festival in 1988, and also recruited his star peers for regional concert tours. He released four discs with his own ensembles and drummed into his eightieth year.

"Ronnie helped me get started in New York," noted educator and Vanguard Jazz Orchestra drummer John Riley says. "He was a beautiful man with a light touch and deep groove, a gentleman both on the bandstand and off."

The drummer's widow, Janet Bedford, recalls a memorable Benny Carter club gig. "There were a lot of professional jazz players in the audience," she says. "Ronnie played a solo and someone leapt up from his seat, applauding with his hands above his head. I turned and realized: *My God! That's Max Roach!*"

By chance, it was the sound of Bedford's drums that called to Janet on the night they met. "Someone was playing in the pub," she says, "and I realized I could hear a *tune* in the drums. I thought, *He's not just banging; he's making music. Who IS that?*" **Jeff Potter**

Dallas Taylor

Dallas Taylor, who made his name as part of the original Crosby, Stills & Nash lineup, appearing at Woodstock with the group, died this past January 18 from complications from viral pneumonia and kidney disease, at age sixty-six.

Taylor was born in Denver on April 7, 1948. He was raised in San Antonio and eventually moved to Los Angeles in the mid-'60s, where he played in the psychedelic rock band Clear Light and with John Sebastian, who introduced him to Stephen Stills. Taylor's rock-solid drumming on hits like "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" helped Crosby, Stills & Nash's self-titled debut recording become a generational watershed in 1969. Soon the group would add Neil Young, and Taylor would supply the steady backbeat to classics like "Almost Cut My Hair," "Helpless," and "Woodstock" on CSNY's 1970 release, *Déjà Vu*. Taylor would go on to play with Stills's band Manassas in the studio and on the road. He played with Paul Butterfield as well, and would later appear with Van Morrison at the 1974 Montreux Jazz Festival, documented on the excellent DVD set *Live at Montreux 1980/1974*.

Taylor battled demons in the form of alcoholism and substance abuse his entire adult life, eventually needing organ transplants. He even received words of caution from an unlikely source. "Keith Moon was always rock's number-one bad boy," Taylor told the *New York Times* in 1990. "But I remember him telling me, 'Dallas, you do too much drugs.'" In 1990, friends including the Eagles' Don Henley held a benefit to raise funds for a liver transplant, a testament to Taylor's status in the industry. Though he withdrew from performing, Taylor became an addiction counselor and substance abuse interventionist, working with youths and celebrities.

After Taylor's death, comedian Richard Lewis tweeted, "Dallas Taylor died but his legendary drummer status lives on, as do 1000s of recovering addicts he saved." Guns n' Roses' drummer Matt Sorum tweeted, "You saved my life and many others." For more on Taylor, who is survived by his wife, three children, and several grandchildren, check out his 1994 memoir, *Prisoner of Woodstock*.

Ilya Stemkovsky

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KIT OF THE MONTH

Vintage Fever

"I reconnected with drums and drumming at the age of fifty-eight," Richard Martindale of Madison, Connecticut, says. "I hadn't had a kit or played for forty-plus years. I credit my teenage son, who, after learning that that was my passion when I was his age, encouraged me. I bought a cheap kit and started reading *MD* again. It didn't take long before I started to get 'vintage fever.'

"My first kit, at age thirteen, was an orange-sparkle Kent. I thought it would be cool to find a similar kit to just sit in the room for nostalgia, so I scoured the classifieds. My search turned up a grainy, out-of-focus pic of a neglected, beat-up kit in someone's basement. It was a four-piece—no snare, of course—and it wasn't orange, but it had these strange lugs that I had never seen before. After some research, I was sure the kit was rare and special.

"It took two years, but this is the result. My friend 'Mouse,' a Kent collector who actually grew up across the street from the Kent factory, found me the correct snare shell, sans the throw-off and butt plate. Those took another year of searching. The kit boasts everything period correct, from the Kent hi-hat cymbals and crash to the foil badges—not stickers—and original Kent sticks. The stands are Rogers.

"The Kent brothers may not have made the highest-quality drums, but this kit sits proudly alongside my Rogers and Gretsch kits. Yes, I did get vintage fever bad!"

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitofthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.

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